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GUIDE *to Abergavenny,*

TO THE
TOWN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

OF

A BERGAVENNY.

BY JOHN WHITE.

A BERGAVENNY:

PUBLISHED BY JAMES HILEY MORGAN, HIGH-STREET;

AND TO BE OBTAINED OF ALL BOOKSELLERS IN THE COUNTY.

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P R E F A C E .

THE Author of the present volume was induced by his friends resident in Abergavenny and the neighbourhood to offer to the public a short history of the town and the objects of interest it contains, with some account of the scenery, antiquities and residences in the vicinity, which are likely to attract the attention of the tourist, and might be made in excursions of a few hours (or at the most within a day), including the return to Abergavenny. He does not lay claim to any originality of thought in the present pages, but has endeavoured, as far as possible, to be correct in his statements, and has, in his descriptions, given (wherever he could) the result of his own personal observations, and, in other instances, has relied on those who were best qualified to furnish information. He has derived considerable assistance from Coxe's History of Monmouthshire, but has endeavoured to supply one deficiency in that valuable work, often commented upon, namely, the total want of correct orthography in the Welsh names, which, by depriving them of meaning, diminishes their interest materially; and he only hopes that his humble endeavours to perpetuate the remembrance of a Town and Neighbourhood, endeared to him by grateful recollections of much kindness received, may meet with a favourable reception.

ABERGAVENNY, SEPTEMBER, 1845.

GUIDE TO THE TOWN AND NEIGHBOURHOOD
OF
ABERGAVENNY.

CHAPTER I.

HISTORY AND ANTIQUITIES OF THE TOWN AND CASTLE.

MONMOUTHSHIRE forms part of the ancient district of Gwent, is still inhabited by thousands of the ancient British race, and continues, in point of fact, to be a part of South Wales. It forms a considerable portion of the Diocese of Llandaff, and the Welsh language, or (as it is now called by philologists) *the Cymric*, spoken in the mountainous parts of this county, is extremely pure. Monmouthshire was by an old Act (of Henry VIII.) nominally added to the English counties, to be included in the circuits of the English Judges; but this neither altered the character of the county, nor changed the race of the natives, and it virtually remained as much a part of Wales as before, and continued to be included in most of the Tours and Histories of the Principality; and since the late changes in the Legislature have done away with the distinction of English and Welsh judicature, Monmouthshire can no longer in that point of view be considered as less a part of Wales than her twelve sister counties, whose ecclesiastical governance, language, and inhabitants, are likewise Welsh, and whose system of judicature is now all alike.* There is a curious work by Rogers, intitled "Memoirs of Monmouthshire, anciently called Gwent," printed in the beginning of the 17th century, and dedicated to all the principal men of the district, at the head of whom is "The Right Hon. Earl of Wharton, Guardian to Sir

* The Welsh, in speaking of the extent of Wales, always say "the thirteen counties," "Y Tair Sir ar ddeg o Gymry."

Charles Kemys, Bart., John Morgan, sen. and jun., of Tredegar, Esquires, Sir Hopton Williams, Knight, in which there is as follows:—
“ About fifty years after the incarnation of our blessed Saviour this province submitted to the Romans, but was governed by kings and princes of their own, who paying the tribute imposed, did enjoy their ancient rights and privileges, being never conquered by Saxon, Dane, or Norman, ‘till the reign of Henry II.” We also find in the same work—“ It is very remarkable, that in Upper Gwent (being not above forty miles in circumference) there were seven religious houses suppressed in the time of Henry VIII., a number not to be paralleled within the same compass in all Britain, viz., the priories of Chepstow, St. Kinmark, Strugle, Monmouth and Goldclift, and also the ancient and large abbey of Tintern.” Having given this slight outline of the importance of Gwent at so early a period of British history, we proceed to describe the advantages bestowed upon it by nature.

Monmouthshire has justly been described as combining more various beauties than any other county in Great Britain, and where is the tourist who has attempted to disprove this assertion? It is indeed rich in everything which can render a country delightful. It is adorned with extensive and undulating valleys, where nature reigns in all her proud magnificence; through which streams, flashing in the sunlight, roll onwards in their sinuous courses, their banks lined with tall and nodding trees. Mountains, wild and blue, and rugged, pierce the topmost clouds with their cone-like peaks—presenting a bold variety of scenery. It is studded with crumbling castellated remains of the past, touching its loveliness with a melancholy shade, and telling the traveller that its historic fame was bright in years gone by. It teems with interest; and the antiquary, the historian, and the poet, may find in it inexhaustible stores for food and reflection. Who has not heard of Raglan, and its ivy-mantled towers? and he who chanced to visit it when

“ The moonlight fell, like Pity, o'er the walls,
And broken arches, which the conqueror, Time,
Had rode unto destruction,”

would be inclined to uncover his head, in awe and silent admiration of its shadowy grandeur. What man of feeling has passed through

Chepstow without paying a just tribute of respect to the old anti-quarian, Time, by gazing upon its grey towers ; or the abbey of Tintern, bearing the marks of a thousand changes, deserted by its former inmates, and nothing left but the sunbeam and moonlight to cheer its aged days ? And though it is so reduced, and

“ No incense rises, save some chance wild flower
Breathes grateful to the air—no hymn is heard—
No sound—but the bat’s melancholy wings,
And desolation breathes from all around,”

the traveller still finds that

“ The columned aisles with whispers of the past
Are vocal,”

and he who was born on the same ground as the Fifth Harry cannot look coldly on, but must exclaim with pride, “ This is my own, my native land ! ” Mountains and streams, rocks, hills and valleys, green fields and trees, castles and abbeys, all unite to shed a glorious lustre over this choice spot of the aboriginal inhabitants of Britain. The valley through which the Usk winds is one of the most interesting in Monmouthshire, and on its beautiful banks lies the town of Abergavenny, sometimes corrupted by the lisping abbreviation of *Abergaany*, but which appellation is both incorrect and inharmonious. According to the opinion of a learned Welsh antiquary (*Carnuanhauc*) the word *Abergavenny* signifies the embouchure of the *Gavenny*, and is descriptive of its situation on the confluence of the river *Cevenni* and the Usk. *Aber* is Welsh for confluence ; Abergavenny corresponds with the Roman *Gobannium* ; the name of the river *Cevenni* is formed of *Ceven-Wy ridge water*; *Ceven* (a mountain ridge). When the Normans came here, not understanding the meaning of the word, they corrupted it into *Bergavenny*, *Berg* signifying town, and thus it is sometimes found written in old documents. The Welsh re-translated this into *Tref-Venni*, (*Tref* being Welsh for *Town*, *the town of Venni*), and it is thus given by Lewis Glyn Cothe, a famous Welsh poet of the fifteenth century ; but this was again dropped, and the old original appellation of Abergavenny restored. The Welsh often call it shortly “ *Venni*. ”

A situation more pleasing than that of Abergavenny could scarcely be conceived ; with the waters of the Usk at its feet, and

mountains uniting the extremes of wildness and fertility, and which form a vast natural amphitheatre round the town, and we might say with Bowles—

“ Mountains! the curious muse might love to gaze
On the dim records of your early days ;
Oft fancying that she heard like the low blast,
The sounds of mighty generations past.”
* * * * *

“ In such a spot, amidst these glorious views,
The pensive poet, in his drooping age,
Might wish to place his reed-roofed hermitage,
Where much on life's vain shadows he might muse.”

The town lies, as it were, sleeping at the foot of the Little Scyrryd (*Scyrryd vach*), and being placed in an elevated situation, it commands a full view of the valley beyond Crickhowel.* The tourist would be much gratified with the view from the Castle-hill. Standing on that spot, Sotheby sung—

“ Here while I wake the reed beneath the brow
Of the rent Norman tower that overhangs
The lucid Usk, the undulating line
That nature loves. Whether with the gentle bend
She slopes the vale, or lifts the gradual hill,
Winds the free rivulet, or down the bank
Spreads the wild wood's luxuriant growth, or breaks
With interrupting heights the even bound
Of the outstretched horizon. Far and wide
Blackening the plain beneath, proud Blorengh lower ;
Behind whose level length the western sun
Dime his slope beam ; there the opposing Mount,
Eastern of craggy Skyrnid, sacred soil,
Oft trod by pilgrim foot. O'er the smooth swell
Of Derry glide the clouds that gathering hang
Round yon steep prow, amid the varied scene
Towering aloft. As gradual up the height
Of the rough hills, ascending Ceres leads
The patient step of labour, the wide heath
Where once the nibbling flock scant herbage cropt,
Wave in the breeze, with golden harvests crowned.”

The scene as the visitor enters the town by the Monmouth road is of the finest description. At one glance he takes in mountains, valley, castle, and river, groves, woodlands, and dells. The mountains perfectly harmonize with the beautiful and picturesque features of the valley, and where elevated to any considerable size, their asperities are softened by their distance. To the north is seen the bifurcated summit of the Scyrryd Vawr—craggy, bald, and abrupt, presenting a bold contrast to the undulating slopes and cultivated sides of the other mountains—more sublime and

* *Crug Hywyl*, or Hywyl's Mount.

striking than its fellows, yet not less pleasing. Directly opposite to the Scyrryd, westwards, tower the Llanwenarth Hills, a beautiful group of mountains, regular and grand. They consist of four hills, called the Derry, the Rhôlben, the Graig Llanwenarth, and Llanwenarth Hill. On these is based another hill, termed the Pen-y-Vâl, or the Sugar-Loaf, from its cone-like appearance; this rises, like a mimic Vesuvius, to the clouds, describing an outline remarkable for its undeviating smoothness and easy gradation. Beyond these the traveller's eye glances along the fertile and picturesque Vale of Crickhowel, terminating in a point in the distant perspective, beautifully fringed with woods, containing thickets diversified with turrets, and ruined arches almost buried within them; hamlets, churches, houses, cottages, and farms, blending into one general and extensive scene of loveliness; the Usk is seen winding its course of silvery sheen between banks lined with tall and luxuriant trees. Beyond all this the eye discovers an immense mass of mountains blackening the horizon. Immediately westwards is seen the broad-breasted Blawreng, scowling upon the plain beneath, and towering magnificently and proudly. To the right we find the Skyrryd Vach (Little Scyrryd) sending the sweet odours of its golden furze upon the air, and presenting an humble contrast to the grand character of the rest of the landscape. If this glorious assemblage of nature's charms does not rivet the eye of the traveller as they burst upon his view, he may be put down as devoid of all feeling or intelligence.

Considered as a small place, Abergavenny is generally well and regularly built; but in historical interest it gains all that it loses in size; and in this respect it excels any other town in the district of Gwent. It would be a little world for the writer of historic romance, and it is a matter of much astonishment to us that Abergavenny and its neighbourhood have not attracted more attention from the antiquary and the artist. There are also mineral waters which might be turned to great advantage, but which are neglected.

Romance always has dallied with history. She has ever endeavoured to strip history of her plain clothing, and wrap around her the mantle of fantasy, so that it has become a matter of great difficulty to distinguish between truth and fiction. Thus the early

history of our country has been so clothed in the ideal, that it is not easy to separate the former from the latter. Still, through the cloud of mystery that envelops the primitive period of British fame, we may trace many a stream of light with undoubted trust, and thus learn that Abergavenny was a place of great importance during the most stirring and troublous times. It was one of that chain of fortresses which were continually kept on the alert during the struggles of the Romans and Britons, and the conflicts severally of Saxon, Danish, and Norman lords; and it is well known that within its precincts many an interesting event took place. If we look at its geographical position, we shall find that in its neighbourhood Caractacus fought for freedom; and that here the chivalry of Uther Pendragon and Arthur contested with the Saxon. But alas! these gleams from the land of shadows only lead us to lament the much we have lost.

After the Romans left the island, there is every reason to suppose Abergavenny was occupied as a fortified post by the Britons. The assertion that it was the site of a Roman station—the *Gobannium* of Antoninus, has been denied, and many arguments have been wasted in the dispute. The following remarks go a great way to prove that such was the case. Several Roman coins have been dug up, one of which was a valuable gold piece of Otho. Several bricks have been found near to the castle, bearing the inscription, “LEG. II. AUG.” Roman remains have been discovered, amongst which was a Roman sudatory connected with the castle. It is too evident from the agreement of distances as laid down in the Itinerary of Antoninus, between *Burrium*, Usk—*Gobannium*, Abergavenny—*Isca Silurum*, Caerleon—and *Magna Castra*, Kenchester. The practised eye of the Roman general, Ostorius Scapula, undoubtedly saw the advantages of this spot as a point whence he might issue his troops to execute the vain and daring threat he made, that “the Silurian name should be exterminated from the earth, as the Sagambrian had previously been from the states of Gallia, by the Roman arms;” and this is tacitly confirmed by the still plainly traceable Roman road leading from the great centre point of his operations in the western parts of Britain hence—we allude to *Magna Castra*, or Kenchester, in Herefordshire.

If even Ostorius could not so far establish the Roman power as to be enabled to raise a fort in the heart of the Silurian territory, his successor, Julius Frontinus, in the reign of Vespasian, would probably have seized the opportunity of fortifying a position so valuable, as a means to secure his future safety. But granting that this did not occur, Agricola, who succeeded Julius Frontinus, directed his legions against the Ordovices, conquered that people, and united the two provinces into one, denominated *Britannia Secunda*; and surely, during these transactions its advantageous situation could not have been overlooked. It must also be remembered that from the time the Romans regarded Siluria as a tributary province to the period of their final departure from the island, 330 years elapsed.

After the departure of the Romans, the succession of events becomes wrapped in mystery. Unhappily the period in which the vigour of the primitive Briton was fully drawn out, and in which we might have traced his natural character, is very much lost to us. Here and there a deed of heroism penetrates the general gloom, but such only tell us that those were stirring times. It undoubtedly was a fearful epoch when the Britons, assailed by the Scots and Picts, called in the aid of the Saxon, and Vortigern turned traitor to his country; when the chivalrous daring of Aurelius Ambrosius, Uther Pendragon, and "the immortal Arthur," endeavoured to stay the torrent of invasion—daring only equalled by the most renowned heroes of Greece and Rome. Yet, despite such bravery, the masses were driven into the interior of their mountain fastnesses, and the borders of Gwent were scenes of perpetual strife. Could these mountains speak, what tales they could tell! They must have been points of extraordinary interest in those sanguinary times.

In the early part of the Norman period, the importance of this position, to enable those invaders to withstand the perpetual attacks of the Welsh was clearly manifest, and it became necessary for the castle to be entirely rebuilt or considerably strengthened. The grand feudal tenures gained to the lawless barons soon became petty royalties, where the Norman noble was endued with despotic power, which he used upon his weaker enemies to gain his own unprincipled

purposes. Abergavenny at this time was the theatre of important events. The quarrels of the barons amongst themselves, in which the people were always the sufferers, were productive of the most disastrous consequences. About this time the town was pillaged and almost destroyed by the Welsh, who, trodden upon and irritated by the haughty adventurers, rose in a body and fearfully retaliated. The struggles of the De Braoses and Sytsyllt ap Dyfnwal and his sons raised Abergavenny to a place of much consequence in the border warfare of the country.

After the kingdom had arrived at a more settled state, and the intruders were naturalised by

“That good old plan
That those may take who have the power,
And those may keep who can.”

Abergavenny retires from public notice—the lot of all small places which gather renown from scenes of passing conflicts.

At the commencement of what may be regarded as the second period of English history, the agitated state of the times again elevated Abergavenny to a condition of importance. It appears that the town was strongly garrisoned and fortified by the friends of royalty. In the year 1503, in the reign of Henry IV., Owain Glyndwr rose to assert his own rights and avenge the wrongs of his country, and Monmouthshire became the scene of warlike operations. Abergavenny declared itself in favour of Henry, and for a length of time offered a gallant resistance to the Welsh forces. But soon after the battle of Brynglás, in Radnorshire, when Owain completely routed the forces under the command of Sir Edward Mortimer, of Wigmore, uncle to the celebrated Earl of March, the victorious chieftain suddenly appeared before Abergavenny, and after a short conflict succeeded in entering the town; and reduced it to ashes. There is a tale related by some of the old natives, that Glyndwr succeeded through the assistance of a woman, who opened one of the gates at midnight:—hence the term Traitor’s-lane is given to the road leading to the spot where the gate formerly stood.

After this, which may be regarded as an interesting circumstance connected with the history of the town, we know nothing of the succession of events until the time of the Commonwealth

Soon after the battle of Naseby, and prior to the siege of Raglan by the forces of the Parliament, Sir Trevor Williams, of Llangibby, and four other gentlemen of the county, Cromwell's active friends, were arrested by the agents of Charles and carried to Abergavenny Castle, and that monarch proceeded to sit in person on their trials. Any other judge would have convicted them at once of high treason, but that imbecility of mind which was the principal trait in Charles's character was on this occasion manifested. Sir Trevor Williams's tears and entreaties so worked upon the irresolution of the king, that the trials of the prisoners only resulted in a temporary confinement in the castle. It is said that on Charles apologising to the Marquis of Worcester for his leniency, that nobleman replied, " Well, sir, you may chance to gain you the kingdom of heaven by such doings as these, but if ever you get the kingdom of England by such ways, I will be your bondsman."

Upon the landing of William III. in England, Abergavenny was involved in the general confusion that ensued. The inhabitants of the town were by no means satisfied with the new government, and became considerably disaffected in consequence. Violent dissensions and tumults at the election of bailiff took place. At this period Abergavenny was a corporate town, governed by a bailiff, recorder, and twenty-seven burgesses; but in consequence of its violent disaffection, William deprived it of its charter, which was never afterwards restored.

From this period to the present time no historical event of consequence has occurred, unless we mention that the town was selected as the place of confinement for 200 French prisoners, who were taken in the last war by the British troops, and brought to England. The repeated disturbances which have taken place upon the hills since the iron works have risen to an important station in the commerce of South Wales, kept the town in a state of alarm while they lasted. At the time when the Chartist insurrection flashed across the political world, and as suddenly died away, Abergavenny, from its position, became a scene of great excitement; but the town was constantly on the alert, both in its civil and military capacities, and no outrages were committed then. It

certainly may rank in the respectability and talent of its inhabitants as equal, if not superior, to any other town in South Wales. The tradesmen are spirited and well-informed men, though not numerous. Leland described Abergavenny, in his Itineraries, as "a fair waulled town, meatly well inhabited, havyng paroch church." At the present time the general character of the buildings is regular. The spirit of improvement which we see in the present day influencing so mightily the British people, has not been idle in Abergavenny. Frogmore-street, High-street, and Cross-street have assumed quite a different appearance of late, and there is every reason to believe they will be still more improved, and that great desideratum, a hall, capable of accommodating a greater number of persons than any other in the county, has recently been erected by the public spirit of Mr. E. Lewis. Soon after the town had been deprived of its charter, Abergavenny began to decline as a place of importance, yet for many years after a considerable trade in shoes was carried on, and very large quantities were sent to Bristol for exportation. The town was considerably enriched by the far-famed white Welsh flannels, for the manufacture of which it is well adapted, of which large quantities were formerly sent to India; the mountain sheep supply a fine kind of wool, and the water in the vicinity is peculiarly adapted to render it soft and delicate; but only a comparatively small quantity of this particular sort of flannel is now made; Welsh woollens are manufactured in the neighbourhood by hand-loom weavers, who are numerous in this district, and whose picturesque white-washed cottages and neat gardens are seen by the sides of the mountain streams, and are, perhaps, the only establishments to which the name of "*factory*" can be attached without possessing any one of the grievous evils which have so continually demanded the interference of the Legislature, in connection with those nurseries of vice and disease which we fear still exist in many parts of England. The Welsh hand-loom weaver possesses some simple machinery for carding and spinning the wool, which is set in motion by a large water wheel, acted on by the stream, while ten or twelve happy, healthy children prepare and supply the wool, and are also sent out with the pieces of woollen to those by whom they have

been ordered. These small weavers make a large quantity of strong and serviceable material for the clothing of the native population, and they attend the market with the produce of their own industry. A few years ago no farmer's wife was ever seen out of woollen, a fashion which preserved health, and prevented the accidents from fire, which are now constantly occurring from the prevalence of cotton clothing, but notwithstanding which the demand for Welsh woollen continues to be considerable for home consumption, and within the last ten years much additional profit has been derived by the Welsh weavers, in consequence of the increased demand from the encouragement given by the higher classes in connection with the Cymreigydion; and not only is there a considerable quantity ordered for purposes of charity, instead of the flimsy printed calicoes before bestowed, but a great deal of fine woollen is made for the dresses and cloaks of the ladies in the neighbourhood, as well as for gentlemen's waistcoats and trousers in the vicinity, who, with very proper feeling, patronize the native looms, to the great benefit of their countrymen. The Welsh woollens are totally different from the English or Scotch manufacture, very durable, and adapted for washing; they are woven in checks and stripes, and some of the patterns are extremely ancient. There are no shops attached to the weavers houses, as they merely weave according to orders, or for the neighbouring market; the price varies from 1s. a yard to 9s., according to the quality and width, and some good specimens are generally to be seen at Mr. Watkins's, and other drapers in the town. The principal weavers are Mr. Hopkin Morgan, of Llangrwyny, and Mr. Samuel Harris, of Gwenffrwd; and the average of yards woven by the latter are fifteen thousand annually.

Abergavenny also was celebrated for its manufacture of peri-wigs, with which the men of fashion decorated their heads. They were valuable in proportion to their extreme whiteness, and were occasionally sold for forty guineas each. The method of bleaching hair is supposed to have been invented here. When turnpike roads were brought into use, Bristol and London wholesale dealers sent their travellers into Wales, and so deprived Abergavenny of the advantage which it had from its being a mart for supplying the

midland parts of Wales with shop-goods from Bristol. From this accumulation of unfavourable circumstances, the town began to fall fast into decay; but between the years 1750 and 1760 another source of advantage presented itself, which was readily made available by the industrious inhabitants, and it was again for a time a place of considerable consequence. Physicians of eminence prescribed whey from goats' milk to consumptive persons. Large flocks of these animals being fed upon the neighbouring mountains, and the newly constructed roads having induced many of the English to visit Wales; the peculiarly beautiful situation of the town, the charming variety of the surrounding scenery, and the benefit which invalids derived from the whey, soon attracted very general attention, and Abergavenny was considered a place of fashionable resort. There is, however, a fashion in medicine as well as in dress. Beaux declined wearing periwigs, and physicians left off prescribing goats' whey;—the former fell into disuse, and the latter was no longer considered as the only panacea for pulmonary complaints. Now, however, the trade of the town is fixed upon a more stable basis than the whims of physicians or the caprice of men of fashion. In the year 1788 the Blaenafon Iron Works were commenced, and subsequently those of Beaufort, Nantyglo, Tredegar, Far teg, and other places, and they have been the means of greatly increasing and permanently securing, the commercial prosperity of the town.

Such has been the fluctuating nature of its commercial importance, and such fluctuations, we fear, it will also for the future have to undergo. The present healthy state of the trade of the town is owing to the vast amount of business it transacts upon the hills. We give one instance of this truth. There is at present an extensive establishment for the manufacture of shoes, in which not less than one hundred and fifty men are constantly employed, and occasionally upwards of two hundred. But this prosperity is threatened by the desire for railway speculation which is springing up around it. The proposed South Wales railway, and the one from Newport to Pontypool, will have the effect of inducing nearly the whole of the population engaged in the works to transact their business in Pontypool and Newport; and if effected, Abergavenny

will again fall into commercial insignificance; unless, indeed, there be some other medium discovered by which the energy of the inhabitants may be again brought into action.

The municipal government of the town is now vested in Commissioners, under an act of parliament, possessing £20 a-year freehold property in the town. In 1821 it contained 3,592 inhabitants, and according to the last census 4,953.

That the town was once strongly fortified there does not exist a doubt. The site of the walls may yet be traced; and if we may form a judgment from traditionary evidence, the fortifications were extensive. The western (called Tudor's) Gate, was but a few years ago almost perfect, and was considered as the greatest curiosity of the town, commanding the finest view of the country around, and, as a relic of antiquity, demanding veneration. But the barbarian hand of utilitarianism has placed its ruthless grasp on this fine portal, and it has disappeared.

The castle is in a very dilapidated state; yet it is a matter of wonder that so much remains of the noble structure, seeing that it has been so long standing in a neglected state. The old columns tower lonely and melancholy, flinging their shadows

“ From on high,
Like dials which the wizard, Time,
Hath raised to count his ages by.”

The ivy hangs in graceful festoons over their tops, rejoicing over the past, and seeming to say that Time's locks are ever fresh and green. Although circumstances have made its mouldering towers so interesting to the traveller, yet they are enclosed with high walls, as though the owner felt determined to shut it up from the public eye; and we may almost say—

“ It wins no painter's gaze, it hears no minstrel lays.”

The poet Lotherington has thus very beautifully addressed the old ruin :—

In yonder rude fortress, where Ruin is dwelling,
Along with his comrades, Old Time and Decay,
Where the mouldering towers are solemnly telling,
Of glory and grandeur now long passed away.

The Trumpets and drums were merrily sounded,
And vassals paraded, and banners were flown,
And the light steps of beauty fairy-like bounded,
And minstrels were honoured, and garlands were strown.

Aye, many a noble and many a maiden
 Have gazed on that doom in its beauty and pride,
 And many a captive, with sorrow o'erladen,
 Enchained in its dungeons, has faded and died.

Yes, old walls, thy greatness, thy power and glory,
 Have gone with the years that can never return ;
 But the might and the fame of thy far-distant story,
 Through the dark night of ages unsullied shall burn.

Churchill, too, in the reign of Elizabeth, thus addressed his humble lay :—

“ Most goodly towers are bare and naked left
 That covered were with timber and good lead ;
 These towers do stand as straight as doth a shaft,
 The walls thereof might serve for some good steade ;
 For sound and thicke, and wond'rous high, withal,
 They are indeed, and likely not to fall ;
 Would God, therefore, the owner of the same,
 Did stay them up for to increase his fame.”

The old ruin is situated at the south-western end of the town, elevated on a hill, and commands an extensive scene of the ever-varying landscapes stretching upon all sides. Standing upon the Castle-green, Sotheby poured forth his lay. Viewed from a distance, it presents a peculiarly picturesque appearance, inclosed as it is with beautiful trees, the modern mimic turrets of the new building peeping over their tops, seeming to mock at the remnants of decay mouldering beneath.

It is probable that after the Romans left the island this spot was occupied as a fortified post by the Britons. The present is evidently a style of building subsequent to the Norman era. There is a tradition that Abergavenny Castle originally was built by a giant named Argross, and this serves to prove its extreme antiquity as a fortress, though said to be founded so late as the Norman conquest, by Hammeline de Balun, or Balodun, whom Camden calls the first Lord of Abergavenny, whose father, Dru de Balodin, one of those Norman adventurers who came over with William, and who, under the political system of that wily monarch, were permitted to war and to endeavour to subdue the last indigenous spark of freedom. This chieftain, having conquered the whole district of Overwent, and dying without issue in the year 1090, bequeathed the castle and territory to his nephew Brien de Wallingford, or de L'Isle. The crusading spirit was at this time animating the bosoms of the chivalry of England, and amongst many

others, de L'Isle determined to turn his lance against the infidel. Upon his departure for Jerusalem, he left the castle in the hands of his nephew, Walter de Gloucester, Earl of Hereford, and Constable of England. Brien's dreams of glory ended on the plains of Palestine, and de Gloucester remained in possession till his death. Milo, his son, next succeeded to it, but he dying without male issue, the castle and its contingencies were divided among his three daughters, by one of whom, named Berta, they came into the possession of Phillip de Braose, or Bruse, a powerful baron, from whom they descended to his son, William de Braose. At this period the fortress was of great importance, and witnessed many of those bloody conflicts which resulted from the unjust seizures and tyrannical proceedings of the Lords Marchers, the valiant resistance of the Welsh, and their desperate struggles for independence. The spirit of the times, fostered by deadly feuds and national hatred, was rendered more ferocious by a series of reiterated injuries. In the preceding year to that in which the event we are about to relate occurred, it was believed that the Welsh chieftains had killed Henry de Hereford, uncle of William de Braose, and to revenge his death, in the year 1177, (but under a pretext of celebrating a Christmas festival,) William invited, to his castle at Abergavenny, Seisyllt ap Dyfnwal, Geoffrey his son, and the most renowned chieftains of Powys. In the midst of their festivity, with a view of inflaming their minds, and giving some colour to the baseness of his designs, he informed the Welsh nobles that in future they should not travel armed either with their swords or their bows; and he instantly required of them to take an oath for the due performance of the same. It is easy to imagine in what manner a fiery and high-spirited nobility would relish so imperious a demand, which they would only consider as a badge of their slavery. It was universally and with indignation rejected. On a signal then being made, a number of armed soldiers, who had been stationed in the castle for this purpose, rushed into the hall, and a general massacre ensued. Not satisfied with the blood he had already shed, Braose, attended by his ruffians, proceeded to the house of Seisyllt, at no great distance, which he set on fire; then, seizing the wife of that brave chieftain, and murdering in her presence her infant son, he

carried the wretched mother to the castle of Abergavenny. But de Braose's perfidy was amply punished in the commencement of the succeeding century, by the sons of the murdered chieftains. The spirit of revenge urged them onwards—"a spirit the most potent in uncultivated minds." It seems that Ranulph de Poer, the Sheriff of Gloucester, had been concerned with William de Braose in the massacre, which it appears was perpetrated through the secret influence of the English king. The nephews and sons of Seisyllt, with the other chieftains, having arrived to the age of manhood, were strongly incited to revenge on the English the murder of their kinsmen and parents. In pursuit of this design, early in the morning, they assaulted the castle of Abergavenny, and having scaled the walls, took possession of the fortress, and burning it to the ground, they carried away prisoners the governor and his wife, with all the garrison. The young chieftains, not having met with the objects of their vengeance, stormed another fortress lately erected by Ranulph de Poer, near Monmouth, the garrison of which, unable to resist their fury, was driven down into the fosses and slain by the lances of the enemy. Ranulph, with nine of the most distinguished personages in Monmouth, perished in the general carnage; and William de Braose himself, sorely wounded and overwhelmed in the fosse, was with difficulty rescued, and scarcely escaped with his life.* A few years subsequent to these proceedings, during the hostilities between Henry and Llewelyn ap Iorwerth, the ferocious De Braose was sent into the country to search for provisions, and such was the barbarous nature of his acts, that the infuriated people rose and eventually took him prisoner. A truce between the two nations soon afterwards was agreed to, and William was released on payment of three thousand marks. But shortly after, by surprise, he fell again into the same situation; and, as it is said, having been discovered carrying on an amour with a Welsh princess, the sister of the English monarch (but the wife of Llewelyn), he suffered an ignominious

* Miss Sinclair observes, in her *Rambles in South Wales*, that the Lords of Abergavenny were of the same blood as the hero Bruce, of Scotland. She herself claims a relationship to these celebrated characters.

death by the command of the injured husband. Whether the crime for which he suffered was real, or only imputed to him as a pretext for vengeance, his fate was justly due to the tenor of a life deeply tinged by perfidy, and marked by the bloody traces of a spirit the most cruel and ferocious. Similar scenes of diabolical atrocity had occurred previously, when the castle was in the possession of Milo, Earl of Hereford, whose wicked son, Mael, met with a just retribution for his crimes, and was killed by the falling of a stone at the time when Brynllys Castle was burnt. In the person of William de Braose died the last of his family. The Cantelupes next succeeded to the barony. From the Cantelupes it descended to John de Hastings, who is represented, in an heraldic poem, as the mirror of chivalry, blending courtesy with deeds of arms; as bold and impetuous in battle; as gentle and debonnair in time of peace; and executing justice with wisdom and impartiality.* The great grandson of this nobleman dying without issue, the barony of Abergavenny went into the hands of the Valences; this line in like manner becoming extinct, the Herberts succeeded; then the Greys; and after the Beauchamps came into possession by entail; and by a similar means it after passed to Richard, Earl of Warwick, one of the most puissant and valourous nobles of his age, who almost realized the fabulous adventures of Guy, Earl of Warwick, his renowned ancestor. He signalized himself at an early age in opposing Owain Glyndwr, whose standard he took in open combat, and gained great honour at the battle of Shrewsbury. Without recounting the numerous instances of his military skill and heroic intrepidity, which greatly contributed to the success of the English arms in France, it will be sufficient to observe that he was the friend and companion in arms of the Fifth Harry, who gratefully rewarded his services by repeated marks of favour, and gave the highest testimony of respect by appointing him guardian of his infant son. He was no less

* This, like many other fortified castles, was held in capite by the king. By the writ of inquisition, it appears that John de Hastings held it by homage, ward, and marriage, and when it happened that there was war between the King of England and Prince of Wales, he was to defend the country of Overwent at his own expense, in the best manner he could, for his own and the king's advantage, and the defence of the realm of England.

distinguished by foreign princes than his own sovereign. Being deputed, with a retinue of 800 horse, to accompany the English prelates to the Council of Constance, he received uncommon marks of approbation from the Emperor Sigismund and his consort. Having signalized himself at a tournament, the empress took his badge from the shoulder of one of his knights and placed it on her own. The emperor, also, on his arrival in England, said to Henry, no Christian Prince had such a knight for wisdom, nurture, and manhood, and if all courtesy was lost on earth, it might yet be found again in him. He was not only the most distinguished warrior, but the greatest traveller of his age. After visiting France and Italy, he made a visit to the Holy Land, and was received at Jerusalem with the highest mark of respect, as well for his own valour, as for his descent from Guy, Earl of Warwick, whose romantic history was adapted to the genius of the East. From Jerusalem he returned to Venice, and continued his travels through Russia, Lithuania, Poland, Prussia, and Germany. During this expedition he performed extraordinary feats of chivalry in divers tournaments, in which he surpassed all his contemporaries. He died at Rouen, in Normandy, in the year 1439, bearing the high office of Regent of France. Henry, his son, who gave proofs of valour equal to his father, dying at an early age, the castle of Abergavenny was wrested from Sir Edward Neville, to whom it should have descended, by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, the great king-maker, and was not restored to the descendants of Sir Edward Neville, the rightful heirs, till 1503. George Neville, the fifteenth baron, was, in the year 1784, created Viscount Neville and Earl of Abergavenny, who, dying in the following year, was succeeded by his son Henry, third Viscount Neville. Abergavenny is the only barony amongst the numerous honours conferred by the crown on the chieftains, who, subsequent to the Norman invasion, lent their aid in the subjugation of Wales, and, like the Earldom of Arundel, it is a feudal dignity, locally attached to the possession of the castle, enjoyed not by creation but by tenure.

Most of the walls are fallen, and the principal remains consist of a round and pentagonal tower. The windows and doorways

were built in the pointed style. From the site, the castle appears to have consisted of two courts; one is converted into a kitchen-garden; the gateway to the other, which formed the principal entrance, and some part of the walls, are still standing. To the south-east of the pentagonal tower is a tumulus which was formerly surrounded by a fosse. In the early part of the present century the remains of the keep were pulled down, and a new building erected on its site. This is much to be lamented. Had the whole of the ruin been left to the work of time, it would have done credit to the taste of the proprietor; but the magnificent remains of the stately towers are no more, and the spirit of this brick-and-mortar age is but too apparent, while the new building adds a very insignificant sum to the rent-roll of the noble earl.

CHAPTER II.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH—THE FREE GRAMMAR-SCHOOL—ST. MARY'S CHURCH
AND ITS MONUMENTS—TRINITY CHURCH—THE DISSENTING CHURCHES.

THE town formerly contained two churches ; the one dedicated to St. John, and the other to St. Mary. The former was the parish church, but is now in a dilapidated state, and the latter was the chapel adjoining, and devoted to the purposes of the priory.

At the period of the dissolution of monasteries by Henry VIII., the parish church was converted into a free grammar-school by that monarch, and endowed with a portion of the priory revenues, which were held in trust by the corporation, and it appears were in some cases unwisely appropriated, for, in the reign of Charles II., a great alteration in the management of the school took place, and a portion of the tithes were leased for the term of ninety-nine years, to Jesus College, Oxford, at £50. per annum, on condition that it should maintain one fellow and one scholar, to be chosen by the bailiff and the vicar, out of the free-school ; or, if none should be qualified, as to learning, for admission into the college, then from any natives of the county of Monmouth. Subsequently to this other regulations and improvements took place, and an Act of Parliament was passed in the year 1760, that the master must be a fellow, scholar, or member of Jesus College, and be chosen by the college and vicar, if resident ; and the fellow and scholar must be elected out of persons born at Abergavenny, or in the county of Monmouth, who have been two years in the school ; and they should be denominated "The fellow and scholar of Bergavenny," and vacate the scholarship and fellowship at the expiration of fourteen years. Under these regulations the endowment at present remains, and the school is conducted by the Rev. H. Peake, curate of St. Mary's, a gentleman in every way qualified for its duties.

An alien priory for monks of the Benedictine order was founded a short time after the conquest, by Hameline de Balun, the Norman possessor of the castle, and not by John de Hastings, a benefactor, as stated by Speed. Camden says that De Balun's son

erected two lazarettos, or hospitals, for lepers, but no vestiges are traceable. An error might have arisen from an imperfect knowledge of the fact that he had two sons lepers, whom he placed in the priory previous to his going on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. William de Braose, whose sanguinary spirit we have before alluded to, in an hour of penitence, granted to this house a tithe of the whole provisions, &c., allowed to the castle, on condition that the abbot and monastery of the monks of St. Vincent, in Mans, to which this house was a cell, should pray for the soul of King Henry I., his own soul, and that of Maud, his wife. The annual revenues at the dissolution, according to Dugdale, amounted to £129. 5s. 8d., and, according to Speed, £59. 4s. 0d. The evil-impelled spirit of Henry VIII., with a ruthless hand, robbed the Roman Catholic establishments of their property, and they gradually throughout the kingdom crumbled beneath his frown. The priory of Abergavenny became neglected too, and was fast moulder away, until it was used for other than religious purposes. It is now converted into a private dwelling, and contains some valuable and interesting pieces of tapestry. King Charles I. and II. are said to have honoured it with their presence, and one room was called "*the king's bed-room.*" It was then the residence of the ancient family of Gunter, by whose daughter and heiress it passed into the Milborne family, and is now in possession of C. Kemys Tynte, Esq., the great-grandson of Lady Martha Milborne, daughter of the third Earl of Oxford, in whose three grand-daughters concentrated the united properties of Gunter and Milborne. The priory is situated on the south-eastern side of the town, and commands a fine view of the Vale of Usk, where the Scyrry Vach and the Blawreng are the chief features of the picture. When St. John's church was converted into a free-school, St. Mary's (the priory chapel) succeeded that structure as parish church, which it has continued ever since. It was originally built cruciform, but the alterations it has undergone, and the additions made to it, have been so great, that the regularity of the structure, both in the interior and exterior, has been entirely destroyed, and it would now be difficult to trace the intention of its founder. As a whole, the church presents a striking combination of the sublime and the ridiculous. The colossean figure of

Abraham lies in the Herbert chapel, and other figures are misplaced. The old monuments are plastered with white lime, in some places nearly a quarter of an inch in thickness. The eastern end of the building is in a pitiable plight; the carved wood-work, once so beautiful, is broken and neglected—great part of it vanished. Alas! poor church! To attempt a description of it as it now exists were utter folly, so we must describe it as it was previous to the year 1820, when the alterations of masons and bricklayers did the work of ruin!

The building consisted of a nave, north aisle part of the transept, with a central tower, a choir with two aisles, and a chancel. The windows and doors are in the original pointed style, except a blind circular arch in the transept, which points at the early Norman. The choir is nearly in its pristine state, having conventional stalls on each side, formed of oak, rudely carved; the one intended for the prior is elevated, and surmounted by a mitre. Though, as a specimen of architecture, this edifice has ceased to display much that can interest the lover of that noble science, yet, from its connection with remote times, and the numerous monuments of persons who once proudly figured on the theatre of life, the visitor will find himself disposed to inspect the inscriptions on the sculptured stone. Part of the south aisle of the choir is denominated the Herbert Chapel, because many of that distinguished family lie buried there, and several ancient and curious monuments commemorate their names. Several branches of this family resided in the neighbourhood. There are also tombs of other noble personages who were Lords of Abergavenny. The richest monument in this church is that of Sir Richard Herbert, of Ewyas, son of William first Earl of Pembroke, and ancestor of the Earls of Pembroke and Caernarvon; it occupies a recess in the south wall of the chapel, the figure is recumbent, with uplifted hands, habited in a coat of mail; the head, covered, repose on a helmet and the feet rest on a lion. Above it are displayed the Herbert arms. His wife was Margaret, the daughter of Sir Matthew Cradock, Knight, of Swansea, Glamorganshire. At the back of the monument are several small figures, carved in alabaster, the largest, of a woman ascending to heaven, supported by an angel under her feet, and several others hovering about her. Some have supposed

that the latter figure was intended to represent the wife of Sir Richard Herbert. Representations of a man in armour, and a woman, are kneeling below; these are probably Sir Richard Herbert and his lady; on each side are their three sons, in armour, and a daughter kneeling; above are escutcheons charged with the Herbert and Cradock arms. A long and narrow piece of brass, containing an inscription, was fixed on the edge of the monument; part of it remains, and part is fallen, but the marks on the stone are yet visible.

Beneath an alabaster monument, containing two recumbent figures, under an arch between the chapel and the choir, are deposited the remains of Sir Richard Herbert, of Coldbrook, and Margaret his wife, daughter of Sir Thomas ap Gruffydd, Knight. The tomb is ornamented on the sides with a variety of figures in relief, but so defaced as to be with difficulty made out. The figures are recumbent, with uplifted hands; Sir Richard Herbert is represented in a full suit of mail, with his head bare, and supported by a sheaf of arrows, which was his crest; his feet rest on a lion. His lady is habited in a long robe; her head reposes on a cushion, supported by two figures, much broken—in all probability, angels,—and her feet rest upon two dogs. Sir Richard was the proprietor of Coldbrook, near Abergavenny, whence he was distinguished by the appellation of Sir Richard Herbert, of Coldbrook. He was a man of uncommon height and prowess, and renowned in feats of arms. He distinguished himself during the contentions of the houses of York and Lancaster, and the heroism which he displayed at the battle of Banbury is related in the style of chivalry by his descendant, the Lord Herbert, of Cherbury. With his pole-axe he passed and returned twice through the enemy's army, and killed with his own hand one hundred and forty men; but when his party was on the point of gaining the victory, the Welsh troops, mistaking a small corps of the army for the advanced guard of the Lancastrian party, under the Earl of Warwick, were seized with a panic and fled on all sides. Sir Richard Herbert, and his brother, the earl of Pembroke, remaining on the field of battle, were taken prisoners, led in triumph to Banbury, and sentenced to death on the following day. Much

intercession was made to save his life, both for his goodly personage and the valour he displayed on the field, but in vain ; the sentence was carried into execution, and Sir Richard Herbert suffered death with a spirit and resolution worthy of his character.*

In the centre of the chapel is another alabaster monument, richly decorated with carving, to the memory of Sir William ap Thomas, and Gwladys, his wife, parents of William Herbert, first Earl of Pembroke of that name, and of Sir Richard Herbert, of Coldbrook. His monument is ornamented with a variety of emblematic figures, and is peculiarly interesting to the natives, because the persons interred were not only the origin of the great family of Herbert, but Sir William was the son of the famous Thomas ap Gwilym, by Maud, the daughter of Sir John Morley, from whom he inherited the castle of Raglan ; and Gwladys was the daughter of the no less distinguished Sir David Gam, and widow of Sir Roger Vaughan, who fell in the battle of Agincourt, by the side of Henry V. Their effigies lie in a recumbent posture on the top of the sepulchre ; he is habited in a complete suit of armour, with a dagger hanging from a rich belt ; his head rests on the bust of a Turk, or blackamoor, which was his crest, and is still borne by some branches of his family ; his feet rest on a lion. His wife is dressed in a close garment covered with a loose robe, and reposes on a cushion, supported by two small figures, much broken, but which appear to have been angels ; at her feet are two dogs. On each side of the tomb are twelve small alabaster figures, in relief, holding scrolls : those on the south side are said to represent twelve apostles ; those on the north are probably martyrs. At the eastern end is a large compartment, much broken, containing the salutation of the Virgin Mary, with an angel on each side. This monument is particularly described by the Welsh poet, Lewys Glyn Cothi, in his elegy on the death of this celebrated and patriotic lady.—(See page 1 of Poems, by Lewys Glyn Cothi, published by the Cywridorion Society in London.)

* Some mistake this tomb for that of his brother ; others suppose that the Earl of Pembroke was buried in some other part of the church, but erroneously, for he was buried in Tintern Abbey.

On the south side is an in-arched mural monument, surmounted by tabernacle work, and a recumbent stone figure, rudely carved, cross-legged, therefore supposed to be a Knight Templar. Churchyard, describing it, says—

“ He was a man of fame,
His shield of black he bares on breast,
A white bird plane thereon ;
A wragged sleeve in top and crest,
All wrought in goodly stone.
And under feet a greyhound lies,
Three golden lyons gay,
Nine flower-de-luces there likewise
His arms doth full display.”

Some have been led to suppose that it was intended to represent the chivalrous John de Hastings; but this is an error—the body of that nobleman was interred at Rouen, in Normandy. A legend is told of the greyhound at his feet. It is said that the knight, returning home one day, saw the cradle, in which was his infant son, overturned, and the lifeless child covered with gore. Being convinced that the dog had destroyed the child, he killed it on the spot; but soon discovered that the faithful animal had saved the infant, by destroying a serpent which had attacked it, and the gore was the serpent's blood. In memory of his regret and gratitude, it is further stated that he caused the figure of the dog to be placed on his tomb. The story is related by Coxe; but it is evidently taken from the well-known incident which occurred at Bedd-Gelart, in Caernarvonshire,* relating to Prince Llewelyn's dog, from which that place took its name.†

On the north side of the second arch of the choir lies a recumbent figure, in freestone, of a man with his hands uplifted, in a short coat of mail: on his head is a helmet, on his left arm a shield, a long sword on the same side, on his right a dagger, and at his feet a bull. The figure is seven feet in length. The story is thus related in the rude style of Churchyard :—

“ His force was much, for by his strength
With bull did struggle so,
He broke clean off his horns at length,
And therewith let him go.”

* See History of Wales, by Caradoc, of Lilancarvan, with Topographical Notices, by Richard Lloyd, page 12.—This legend is also found in other countries both of Europe and Asia. In France it is embodied in the ancient romance of The Dog and the Serpent—(“ *Le Chien et le Serpent.* ”)

† (*The grave of Gelart.*) Gelart was the name of the Prince's dog.

The person here buried was probably Sir Edward Neville, who became Baron of Abergavenny, in right of his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Richard de Beauchamp.

At the north-east corner, next the chancel, are two stone effigies, representing Sir Andrew and Lady Powel, a collateral branch of the Herbert family. Sir Andrew was a Judge, and Lord Lieutenant of the counties of Hereford, Monmouth, and Brecon. The figures are recumbent, and habited as a monk and nun.

In the Herbert Chapel is a flat sepulchral stone, between the monuments of Sir William ap Thomas and Sir Richard Herbert. The inscription commemorates the last male of the Coldbrook branch, and is inserted because it ascertains the exact situation of the two last-mentioned monuments, and tends to illustrate the genealogy of the family :—

Here lieth the body of Sir James
Herbert of Coldbrook Knt.
Who departed this life ye 6th
Day of June 1709, in the 65 year
of his age ; having in his
Life time enjoyed in his native
Country all the chief honours
Due to his birth and quality as member
of Parliament, etc, as they were enjoyed
By his ancestors ever since the reign
of King Henry the first, he being the
nineteenth in descent from Herbert
Lord Chamberlain to the said King
and the ninth from Sir Richard Herbert
of Coldbrook, interred under the tomb
on his left side who with his brother
William first Earl of Pembroke of that
Name was (valiantly fighting * * * * *
King Edward the Fourth, in that
Great quarrel between the Houses of York
and Lancaster) taken prisoner * * * *
Banbury, and beheaded at Northampton
In the year 1469 ; both the said brothers
Being sons of Sir William Thomas and
Gladice de Gam who are interred under
the middle tomb ye said Sir James
Herbert leaving behind him Lady Judith
Herbert, who deceased the 12th day
of November the same year. They
left behind them one daughter his
sole heir, named Judith, married
To Sir Thomas Powell, of Broadway
In ye county of Carmarthen, Baronet
To whom she hath born several sons
and daughters. Here also lieth the body
of Sir James Powell, fifth son of ye said Sir Thos
Powell, grandson of the said Sir James
Herbert, who died an infant ye 11th
Day of April 1709.

At the north end of the choir are two recumbent figures, of freestone, representing two females, of rude sculpture, much dilapidated; one of which, according to Churchyard, is “A ladye of some noble house, whose name I know not.” From a MS. account, quoted by Gough, in his edition of Camden’s Britannia, they are said to have been the co-heiresses of Braose, Lord of Abergavenny: all the distinctions which might lead to ascertain the person represented by the first figure are defaced. In Churchyard’s time she held a squirrel in her hand, of which a tale was told, that in endeavouring to catch a squirrel, she fell from a wall and was killed. The effigy of a woman at her feet holds a heart in her hand, and bears on her breast a shield, charged with three large fleurs-de-lis. These are the arms of the Lords of Wern-ddû, and seem to indicate that the person here interred was Christian, heiress of Wern-ddû, who married Adam ap Reginald, descendant of Henry Fitzherbert, Lord of Llanllowel, and common ancestor of the different branches of the Herberts.

In the north aisle of the choir is a small inclosure, called the Lewis Chapel, from a remarkable monument, formed of one piece of stone, to the memory of Dr. David Lewis, erected by himself. The effigy is recumbent, dressed in a long robe, with his hand upon a book; an anchor, carved on the front, alludes to his office as Judge of the Admiralty. Wood says he was of All-Souls’ College, and was afterwards principal of Jesus College, Judge of the High Court of Admiralty, Master of St. Catherine’s Hospital, near to the tower of London, one of the Masters in Chancery, and of her Majesty’s (Queen Elizabeth’s) Requests. He died in London, the 27th day of April, 1584, and was buried at Abergavenny on the 24th of May following. He lived at Llanddewi Rhyddyrch, and the mansion and estate continued in the possession of his descendants till about the middle of the last century, when they were sold to the trustees of the will of Charles Williams, of Caerleon, and united to the Coldbrook estate.

In the middle window of the north aisle is a colossean figure, carved out of a single piece of oak, with a long beard and dishevelled hair, *apparently* carrying a smaller figure on his shoulders. It was at one time supposed to represent St. Christopher,

carrying (according to the legend) our Saviour, when a child, across a river; but, on accurate examination, it appears to have been intended for the Patriarch Abraham, represented in a recumbent posture, with an angel supporting his head, and the genealogical tree of the Tribes of Israel.

Under the first arch, between the chapel and the choir, is a monument, of stone, with two figures in relieveo, of a man and woman kneeling on each side of an altar, with a Latin inscription—"HIC IN CHRISTO QVIESCENS GVLIELMUS BAKERIS, A.R., IRENARCHA IUSTITIE VINDEX, ILLIBATÆ INTEGRITATIS, &c.; OB. 30 Oct., 16**"—William Baker, who is here commemorated, was steward of Lord Abergavenny, and his wife was sister of Dr. David Lewis, buried in the north aisle of the chapel. There is a tablet to the memory of his son, Richard Baker, counsellor-at-law. William and Richard are remarkable as father and brother of David Baker, a learned Benedictine friar, whose sudden conversion, singular character, and literary labours, are recorded by Anthony Wood, in his "Athenæ Oxoniensis."

In the chancel, within the communion rails, in the upper part of the side wall, is a sepulchral stone, with a Latin epitaph, written by Dr. Roberts, Provost of Eton College, which, in harmony of numbers and purity of style, may vie with the works of the Mantuan bard, or any subsequent production.

In the window over the sepulchre of Dr. Lewis is the recumbent effigy, carved in wood, of a man, with his hands uplifted, and the left leg crossed over the right; he has a helmet and short coat of mail; his feet rest on an animal which is headless, but from the claws appears to be a lion. This, it is probable, is the same figure which is described in an old MS. by Gough; and from the arms of Valence and Hastings, once emblazoned on the window above, was probably John de Hastings, a Lord of Abergavenny, who espoused Isabel, daughter of Adamar de Valence, Earl of Pembroke.

Amongst the numerous tablets in the church, the following whimsical epitaph, inscribed on a sepulchral stone in the nave, may be particularised:—

“ Here lieth one of Abel’s race,
 Whom Cain did hunt from place to place ;
 Yet, not dismayed, about he went,
 Working until his days were spent.
 Now having done, he takes a nap,
 Here in our common mother’s lap,
 Waiting to hear the bridegroom say,
 Arise, my dear, and come away.—

Obiit Hen. Maurice, 30 die, Salii 1612.”

Besides what is termed “The Old Church,” and St. Mary’s there is a new, spacious, and elegantly-built structure in the Groffield, known as Trinity Church. It is, in point of architectural beauty, the ornament of the town ; and, as an instance of private munificence, it has but too few parallels in this affluent age. In it “the rich and poor meet together,” and the righteous consideration is kept in view,—“The Lord is the maker of them all.” No velvety-fringed curtain shews a distinction between the man who has been blessed with the bright smiles of fortune, and the man that kneels, humbled to the dust, by the pressure of want, but they bow together before that Being who is the common Father of all. The church is the centre of a neat and beautiful gothic square, formed by the clergyman’s house, free-school, and eight cottages for poor and aged women, all in a style of building in unison with that of the church, and present an exceedingly chaste appearance. These structures were erected and suitably endowed by Miss Herbert, of Abergavenny. The church was consecrated in 1842, by the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Landaff. The architect was Thomas H. Wyatt, Esq., of London.

The rise and progress of Dissent in Monmouthshire forms a remarkable feature in its history, in consequence of its early establishment, and the rapid progress it has made in later times. The Independent and Baptist denominations at Abergavenny were the first Dissenting interests in the county ; and it is probable that the spread of these principles has been more rapid in this district than in any other part of the kingdom.*

* In confirmation of this statement, we may instance the neighbourhood of the Tredegar iron-works alone, (about ten miles from Abergavenny,) where, in a compass of two miles, there are ten Dissenting chapels, (eight of which are Welsh and two English,) and the total of the congregations amounts to five thousand persons. A Sunday school is attached to each chapel.

Abergavenny contains five Dissenting places of worship;—one belonging to the Independents, three to the Baptists, and one to the Wesleyans. The Independent congregation at Abergavenny is the oldest Dissenting body in this county. Monmouthshire was a strong-hold of Independency in the time of Cromwell; and it will be remembered that Sir Trevor Williams, and some other gentlemen of the county, who were taken prisoners by the Royalists a short time prior to the siege of Raglan Castle, and tried by Charles I., *in person, at Abergavenny*, were warm adherents of the Commonwealth, and Independents. Hence we may draw the conclusion, that this cause had an existence in the town as far back as the early part of the seventeenth century. However this may be, it is certain that in the year 1688 the interest was established, and numbered amongst its members some of the most wealthy and influential inhabitants of the town. The place of meeting at that period was in a building subsequently called “The George,”* situate in Cross-street. In 1692 a chapel was erected in Castle-street, at a great expense, and the members of the Independent denomination continued to worship in this place until 1792, by which time their numbers had so increased, that it was necessary to erect another and larger building. The old chapel was converted into a residence for the minister. In 1839 the chapel was enlarged, at a cost of £900, but this sum was soon raised by the members and friends of the interest, and in 1844 the chapel was unencumbered by debt. This is a light and spacious building, capable of containing 800 people. The number of members connected with the church is at present 112. The following are the names of those gentlemen who have successively ministered in the place:—Revds. Mr. Cole, Dr. May, Fowler Walker, David Jardine, Benjamin Davies, John Griffith, Ebenezer Skiel, William Harris, J. James, David Lewis, and the Rev. H. J. Bunn, who is the present pastor. In connection with the Independent cause, in the time of the Rev. D. Jardine, an acadamy to educate young men for the ministry had an existence. After several removals, it has at length been finally established in Brecon.

* The present residence of J. Bellamy, Esq., wine-merchant.

The Baptists, who are numerous in the town and neighbourhood, have from an early period prevailed in Abergavenny and the adjoining parish of Llanwenarth. In the year 1652, a Baptist congregation was formed and organized in the town, and the Rev. Mr. Abbott, a clergyman of the parish, and, subsequently, one of the ejected ministers, (as Palmer, in his Non-conformist Memorial, states,) was a Baptist. He was present at the celebrated public dispute on baptism, held in 1653, in St. Mary's Church, betwixt the Rev. John Tombs, B.D., Vicar of Leominster, and the Rev. John Cragg, M.A., and the Rev. Henry Vaughan, M.A.; the first contending for baptism administered to adult believers, by immersion only, and the other two arguing for its administration to infants, and by affusion. At this time the Baptists rapidly multiplied in Abergavenny. But in consequence of the relentless and sanguinary persecution to which the Dissenters of that day were subjected, especially at and after the Restoration, the Baptists, in a few years, in their church capacity, ceased to exist in Abergavenny, and settled down at Llanwenarth, where, in 1695, a hundred and fifty years ago, on ground given by Dr. Christopher Price, who lies buried in the chancel in St. Mary's Church, they erected a chapel, *the first connected with the denomination in the Principality*, and in which, enlarged to twice its original dimensions, down to the present time, a large and influential Baptist congregation has continued to assemble and worship, the service being in the Welsh language. This religious society has likewise a place of worship in the town, built in 1769, in which, to the present time, Welsh service has been conducted every Lord's Day. On the 1st of January, 1807, an event took place which produced a new era in the annals of the Baptist interest in this locality. The institution long known as "The Abergavenny Baptist Academy," was then commenced, and established in the town, in which young men designed for the ministry of the gospel were educated; and, conjointly with this was originated an English Baptist cause, which, from its beginning to this time, has steadily prosecuted its career, and gradually increased. The academy was placed under the entire superintendence of Micah Thomas, to whom the tuition of the students was committed, and at whose house they were accom-

modated. This arrangement continued for nearly thirty years, when Mr. Thomas, finding his health materially declining, was, consequently, necessitated to resign his office as tutor, and, hitherto, sole conductor of the institution. In 1836 it was removed to Pontypool, after an existence of twenty-nine years and six months in Abergavenny. During its sojourn in this town, above a hundred young men enjoyed its advantages. At the same time that the academy was instituted, the Baptist congregation, then originated, was consigned to the pastoral care and supervision of Mr. Thomas, and, from a small beginning of five members, it has risen to a considerable magnitude. For several years he and his congregation assembled for divine worship in the chapel before-mentioned, belonging to the Welsh people of Llanwenarth; but his attendants multiplying, and that edifice becoming too limited to contain them, it was found necessary to seek a more spacious and convenient place. This led to the erection of an excellent chapel, furnished with a vestry, and a large burying-ground in the rear, situate at the bottom of Frogmore-street. The foundation-stone of the chapel was laid by Mr. Thomas, on the 6th June, 1815. The meeting-house is an oblong square, measuring about 60 feet long, and 36 wide, supplied with three galleries, and altogether of sufficient dimensions to hold five or six hundred hearers. A good Sabbath-school sprung up with this cause, and has co-existed and co-operated with it to this day; and Mr. Thomas, with whose academic duties and ministerial labours the interest commenced, still continues to officiate as the sole pastor.

In consequence of some misunderstanding, in the year 1827, a division took place in the English Baptist chapel, and a separation of the disputing parties was the consequence. The withdrawing party purchased a piece of land in Lion-street, upon which, in the following year, a chapel was built, in which that body has ever since assembled for divine worship. The cost of the ground and building was £1,000; this sum, though great, was soon raised, and the chapel is free from debt. The present number of members is 87.

The celebrated Whitfield once preached in Abergavenny, and Wesley followed in his footsteps. In the Journal of the latter,

three visits are recorded. In vol. 1, p. 222, his first is thus mentioned :—“ *Monday, Sept. 15, 1739—I came to Abergavenny. I felt in myself a strong aversion to preaching here. However, I went to Mr. N.—, (the person in whose ground Mr. Whitfield preached,) to desire the use of it. He said ‘With all his heart, if the minister was not willing to let me have the use of the church :’ after whose refusal (for I wrote a line to him immediately), he invited me to his house.* About a thousand people stood patiently, (though the frost was sharp, it being after sunset,) while from *Acts xxviii. 22, I simply described the plain old religion of the Church of England, which is now almost everywhere spoken against, under the name of Methodism. An hour after, I explained it a little more fully in a neighbouring house, showing how ‘God had exalted Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.’” “ *Wednesday, 17th—The frost was sharper than before; however, five or six hundred people stayed, whilst I explained the nature of that salvation, which is through faith, yea, faith alone; and the nature of that living faith, through which cometh this salvation.*” We have been informed that Mr. Wesley expressed, in his first address, a feeling of backwardness in addressing the good people of Abergavenny on the ground that “ they held such high Calvinistic notions.” His second visit was on *Saturday, Oct. 3, 1741, and is thus described :—“ In the afternoon we came to Abergavenny—those who are bitter in spirit have been here also—yet, Mrs. James (now Mrs. Whitfield) received us gladly, as she did aforetime; but we could not procure even two or three to join with us in the evening, beside those of her own household.” Sunday, 4th—I had an unexpected opportunity of receiving the holy communion. In the afternoon we had a plain, useful sermon, on the Pharisee and the publican praying in the temple, which I explained at large in the evening, to the best dressed congregation I have ever yet seen in Wales. Two persons came to me afterwards, who were, it seemed, convinced of sin, and groaning for deliverance.” His third visit occurred *Monday, Aug. 11, 1746.* He passed through the town in the year 1748, but made no stay. It is highly probable that a regularly constituted society was not formed in**

Abergavenny until the year 1804, at which time it appears the friends of the Wesleyan body in the town had become numerous. In 1805, a house opposite to the Welsh Baptist Chapel, in Tudor-street, was purchased, and adapted to the purpose of a meeting-house. In this place they continued to assemble until the year 1829, when the present edifice was commenced, under the direction of Mr. Powell. This chapel is adapted to accommodate 500 persons. The foundation-stone was laid by the Rev. Mr. Slater, and the opening services were conducted by the Rev. Robert Newton, and the Rev. Mr. Ford. The connexion is in a prosperous condition, and has in operation an efficient Sunday-school. Abergavenny originally was in the Caordiff circuit, but a few years ago it was considered of sufficient importance to form a district of its own.

There is a chapel connected with the Roman Catholic Church in this town, the members of which are both influential and numerous.

CHAPTER III.

REMARKABLE MEN—THE CYMREIGYDDION.

AMONG the eminent individuals who may claim Abergavenny as their birth-place, we must particularize

THE VICAR !

the Rev. W. Powell, B.D. On Thursday, May, 30th, 1844, a tea and coffee service, in silver, together with a salver bearing a purse of 300 sovereigns, as a testimonial of respect, was presented to him by his fellow-townsmen. The scene on that occasion was interesting beyond description. It was not the number present, nor any intrinsic value that might have been attached to the gift ; but it was that community of heart—that unanimous feeling of respect and reverence that pervaded an assembly composed of all classes, all political parties, and every religious persuasion, that formed the soul of the meeting. It was truly a noble sight. There he stood in all the dignity of age, evidently touched by the proceedings. As the various speakers “counted the beads on memory’s rosary,” one spirit pervaded all—that of veneration and love. We may generally judge of a man by the public regard manifested for him ; and we may safely say, there is no individual in existence would breathe any other sentiment than esteem for a character marked throughout by integrity of purpose, and a steady perseverance in the career allotted to him, as a minister of the gospel, and, also, as an active magistrate, in which capacity his services have often been acknowledged in times of great difficulty. He was born in the year 1778, and entered the ministry in the 22nd year of his age. The Vicar, in addition to his attainments as a classical scholar, possesses a highly refined and cultivated mind. He was, in his earlier days, the associate of some of the most distinguished characters of the time, among whom were Sir James Mackintosh, Sir Francis Burdett, Horne Tooke, Dr. Parr,

Bragge Bathurst, Sharpe, Bentham, David Williams, &c. &c., and his natural wit and powers of conversation have always been appreciated by those who could best judge of his talents. May he live long to grace by his presence the society of those who so truly value him.

Dr. Ryan, the author of "The Dialogist" and other works, was, we believe, a native of Abergavenny; and his son, also, Dr. Ryan, lecturer on chemistry, natural philosophy, &c., in the Polytechnic Institution, London, also claims Abergavenny as his birth-place.

The following is an ode written by the last-named gentleman; the allusion is to the massacre of the Welsh chieftains, in Abergavenny, by William de Braose:—

"Quis talia fando
Myrmidonum dolopumve aut duri miles ulissei
Temperet à lachrymis."

VIRGIL.

Hark ! hark again ! on the passing blast
Is heard the voice of wailing ;
Again, again, again it has past,
Some earthly sufferer breathes his last,
His groans on the wind are sailing !
Again, again, again it is heard,
Like the voice of the tempest howling ;
'Tis like the scream of the midnight bird,
Or the demon of mischief scowling :
But hark ! hark ! hark ! for a moment the tempest is lost,
And the sound of a harp on the night air is tossed.

Say, harper, say ; why utter thy moan ?
The festive hall is lighted ;
String thy harp to a merrier tone ;
Haste, haste to the feast, for there alone
The priest and monk are slighted ;
Enter the hall, the table is spread,
The voice of the tempest is chiding ;
You dark clouds, like the shroud of the dead,
From our sight the mountains are hiding.
Hasten to Gwent's mighty castle, for feasting is there ;
But he wildly cried "No," and his screams rent the air.

Hark ! hark again ! the minstrel's voice
Is heard in wildest numbers ;
He calls the whirlwinds to rejoice—
Asks why the lightning slumbers :
"Gloomy spirits of the night,
Children of dismay and fright ;
Airy spirits of the blast,
Is your hour of vengeance past ?
Have ye heard on Isca's plain
Cries of overwhelming pain ?
Has the host who murdered his warrior guest,
Returned his red sword to its iron rest ?

Has he sought the hapless bride,
And the infant at her side ?
Has he pierced the chieftain's soul,
While he quaffed the festive bowl ?
Has the infant's blood been spilt—
Has he done the work of guilt ?"

Thus sang the minstrel to the howling midnight blast,
While the demon forms replied, " 'Tis done, the hour is past !"

Hark ! yon sound : 'tis the ring of a sword—

Now the clashing of many ;
Death has taken his seat at the board ;
Stained with the blood of a mighty lord
 The stream of gay Gavenny.
The chieftain lifted the goblet high
 And he called on his friends to cheer him ;
His bright sword slept on his steel-clad thigh,
 And his youthful son was near him ;
But Seisyllt ap Dyrnwald breathed his last in the bowl,
And the sword of De Braose pierced brave Geoffrey's soul.

On Isca's shore was heard in the night

The sound of horsemen rushing ;
Each horseman bore in his hand a light—
The purple waves reflected the sight
 Of swords with the life-stream blushing ;
A captive bride in their train they bore,
 And she tried her sorrow to smother ;
Her robes were stained with the infant's gore,
 They slew on the breast of its mother ;

Yes ! she smothered her grief, for she hoped her brave lord
Would revenge the child's death at the point of the sword.

Hark ! hark again ! the minstrel sings

In sounds of solemn sadness :—
" The demon of death with his wings
Obscures the torch of gladness ;
Through the gloomy castle gate,
(Gloomy as her wayward fate,)
See the widowed bride repair,—
To the night-breeze streams her hair ;
Hark ! she calls on Seisyllt's name—
Bids her sons revenge her shame !
Mid her stern captors she enters the hall ;
The blood of her friends hath purpled the wall !
Hark ! the agonising cry !
Now behold the frenzied eye ;
See, she clasps the murdered boy,
Once her hope, and once her joy ;
Falls upon her husband's form ;
From his breast still issues warm
The life-blood stream ; while she closes his death-glazed eye,
A widow's curse ascends to yon avenging sky !*

Amongst the institutions of Wales, the Abergavenny Cymreigydion assumes a prominent position. Possessing a firm hold on the affections of all the true sons of the mountains, it

* The author of the above lately received a gold watch and appendages, of the value of one hundred guineas, presented by his friends and pupils, in testimony of his scientific attainments.

sways their opinions on subjects of social and local interest, and the men of Abergavenny may justly be proud of the honour done to their town, in its being selected as the spot over which the immortal spirit of nationality is still allowed to hover. We frequently couple the character of a place with the nature of the institutions it contains—and, indeed, it may be said, that many towns rely solely for their consequence upon the prosperity of a single society—from this cause, Abergavenny commands an importance in the Principality it would not otherwise possess. It is gratifying for the inhabitants to know, that should the Welsh language die away to a whisper, (which Heaven forefend !) Abergavenny will be breathed in unison with its last note, as the spot endeared to the natives of Wales, by the last peaceful struggles made on it for the support of their customs and language.

He who knows not how to value the Welshman's love of country, deserves the pity of all men of sense and intelligence. National feelings are natural to us all ; and *amor patriæ* is admitted to claim an empire more particularly in the hearts of the wise and good. The existence of periodical demonstrations of this feeling argues well for the internal state of a country, and shews that the energies of the people are directed in right channels ; it tends to soothe political discord, and binds all together by that community of innocent and laudable interests so essential to the prosperity of a people. In this light we view the influence of the Cymreigydion, and such will be the conclusion to which every unprejudiced mind must arrive. He, indeed, is only “fit for treason,” in whose breast there does not exist any spark of national fire inherited from his ancestors ; without it, he is verily *poor* ! The Welshman still retains the spirit of the chivalrous Arthur—the ever-memorable words of Rio the Breton are true—“*King Arthur is not dead* ;” and ere this feeling is eradicated, each glorious mountain must be removed from before his eyes, tipped as it is with a thousand associations,—he may almost fancy them gifted with intelligence, as having looked down from their cloudy tops upon deeds that Greece and Rome might have been proud to own. The foaming torrent must be turned from its rocky course, rushing with the same voice it did centuries ago ; the harp must no longer breathe forth its

melody ; each strain, each peculiar thought, language itself must be forgotten, before the Welshman can forget his own land. Should any doubt the truth of these impressions, they have only once to hear the shout that greets the national motto, "*Oes y byd i'r iaith Cymraeg !*" to be convinced that Welshmen can feel as much pride and attachment to their country as any other ancient race in the world. In what period of the world's history has the demonstration of national feeling been viewed in any other light than that of admiration, save, indeed, that of some of our modern utilitarians, who, because they will not see the evidences of good, and cannot discover a noble feeling warming the breast of another race, conclude that such do not exist. The heart of the Welshman is as inalienably allied to his country as the river is to its source ; and though we may not boast Welsh blood ourselves, we can appreciate the sentiments that Welshmen entertain.

The present society of the Abergavenny Cymreigydion was formed about the year 1832, by a body of patriotic tradesmen in the town and its vicinity. It was supported very shortly after its commencement by all the principal resident gentlemen in the neighbourhood, who saw with pleasure so desirable a source of interest and amusement opening to those who possessed any knowledge of the language, the literature, or the music of Wales, as the meetings of the society held out, when prizes are awarded for poems, or essays,* on different subjects ; and contests for pre-eminence take place on the treble-stringed harp, (the national instrument of the Principality,) and also in singing, (for which the Welsh peasantry have a peculiar talent,) as well as for the revival of good national music, by composition, which is now chiefly known through the very beautiful, but most *ancient* melodies of Wales. The purposes of the Cymreigydion, therefore, are, the cultivation of the Welsh language and literature, the increase of historical research, the encouragement of national music and poetry, and likewise of native industry,—to accomplish which ends rewards are given to successful competitors, varying in amount from £1. to £100. The word *Cymreigydion* signifies

* See Appendix.—(a.)

a society of Welshmen, but, to the credit of their English neighbours, it may be remarked, that many handsome prizes have been bestowed, and much support given, not only by English residents in the environs, but by English visitors at the public celebrations they have attended, and which they considered peculiarly desirable, as well in a social as in a national point of view, as uniting the sympathies of all ranks without any mixture of dissension from politics or religion. Cymreigyddion societies (similar to this at its first commencement,) are common all over Wales, but the great difference in that of Abergavenny is, that instead of the celebration of its anniversaries always being confined to a dinner or a supper of the members, and occasional meetings, when a comparatively small number of prizes are bestowed, for trials of skill in prose and poetry *alone*, on given subjects, its celebrations are actual Eisteddfodau, where bards and harpers, and poets compete, from distant parts, as in those congresses of the bards which have been so celebrated throughout ages, and have been patronized by so many British monarchs, among whom Queen Elizabeth and Queen Victoria may both be numbered. The anniversaries of the Abergavenny Cymreigyddion became so attractive, and the prizes and candidates were so numerous, that the celebrations were first of all deferred to two years, and finally to triennial meetings, (as Eisteddfodau,) to which different members of the aristocracy of North Wales occasionally contributed prizes, as well as those more immediately connected with the southern part of the Principality, and especially with the district of Gwent and Morganwg. Besides the prizes before mentioned, given by different individuals, to encourage the poetical and musical talent possessed by the peasantry of the country, and varying from £1. to £15. or £20., there has been for some years a large subscription prize, constituted of from sixty to ninety guineas, for the best essay upon subjects which have called forth not only the learning of Welshmen, but that of the literati of England, France, and Germany, and has produced works of a very high order by natives of each country. This prize* has been awarded twice to Germans, whose attention has

* See Appendix.—(b.)

been of late so much directed to Celtic researches, especially to the ancient language of Britain. The Eisteddfodau of Wales formerly took place at different towns alternately in the Principality, every three years; and great national congresses have been held in the present century, under the presidentship of some of the principal noblemen and gentlemen in North and South Wales. The last (besides those at Abergavenny,) were at Caerdiff, under the presidentship of the Marquis of Bute, in 1834, and at Liverpool, in 1842, under the presidentship of the Hon. Lloyd Mostyn, (eldest son of the present peer,) at which a magnificent Welsh triple harp was given for competition by Sir Charles Morgan, Sir John Guest, and Sir Benjamin Hall, all gentlemen of South Wales, and won by a North Wales harper, Mr. Ellis Robert. But these more distant Eisteddfodau have not at all injured those of the Abergavenny Cymreigydion, but, on the contrary, excited reciprocity of feeling on national subjects between the natives of the different localities. At Abergavenny there are also prizes given for the best specimens of Welsh woollen and hats made within the district; and, as we have remarked, in a former chapter, the increase of demand and improvement in native manufacture by this means has been very considerable. There has been in a few years no less than twenty harps given as prizes at these celebrations of the anniversaries of the Abergavenny Cymreigydion, several of them won by blind competitors; and if (as there is every reason to expect,) they continue to be bestowed as liberally, the traveller will, in a few years, be once more greeted by the melodious sound of that instrument in every village in South Wales, as was heretofore the case, when every gentleman in the Principality would have considered it as derogatory to his station not to have numbered a first-rate harper among the members of his establishment, in the same manner that a piper is considered indispensable by every family of distinction in Scotland.

There are many circumstances which have combined to make the town of Abergavenny peculiarly well adapted, in point of situation, for the national meetings which are the subject of this chapter. It is, first of all, placed on the confines of Monmouth, Brecon, and Glamorgan, and is a convenient central point for the

inhabitants of three counties, while there are, within the circuit of a few miles, a number of individuals who combine, in a singular degree, the will and power to promote their prosperity. We must first mention Sir Charles Morgan, of Tredegar, well known by his countrymen as *Ivor Hael* (Ivor the Generous). His ancient and princely residence is beyond the limits of a ride from Abergavenny, and therefore beyond the limits of this work, but the boundary of his continual and munificent support of every thing national has never yet been known. Each year he gives a harp, called the *Tredegar Harp*; his eldest son, Charles Morgan, Esq., M.P. for Brecon, president for 1845, gives another called the *Ruperra Harp*; and his youngest son, Octavius Morgan, Esq., member for the county of Monmouth, contributes to the literary and musical prizes; his daughter, Lady Rodney, and his daughter-in-law, Mrs. Morgan, support the manufactures of the district. Also, the ancient family of Llanarth, whose members were not only amongst the earliest subscribers, but to whom the Society is indebted (through their connection with that eminent Breton gentleman, Monsieur Rio,) for the revival of an intercourse with Brittany, by the attendance of the five Breton nobles, in 1838, who came over at the instance of Monsieur Rio, whose brilliant, eloquent address had so electrifying an effect at that Fisteddfod, that his words are not likely ever to be forgotten by those who were so fortunate as to hear them. Next we may name Lady Charlotte Guest, who, besides the liberal pecuniary support given by herself and Sir John Guest, (in common with many others,) is, in another point of view, one of the greatest benefactresses to Welsh literature, having herself translated and published, at an immense expense, those ancient and curious Manuscripts called the "Mabinogion," which are too well known among the learned to need comment. Besides this noble lady, we must not omit the Aberpergwm family—Mr. Williams, of Aberpergwm, being himself most singularly gifted, and considered one of the best Welsh scholars of the day, besides being master of numerous modern languages. His sisters, the Misses Williams, in addition to their national tastes and acquirements, possess a talent for music which is rarely found; and Miss Jane Williams has herself not only been

a successful candidate for the prize for “the best collection of unpublished ancient Welsh airs, with the words, as sung,” but she has since published that collection with additions, and it is a work of rare value. A fourth lady may be named, (though now, alas ! no more,) who was one of the earliest friends and supporters of Abergavenny and its Cymreigydion,—Lady Greenly, who likewise was herself a successful candidate for the prize for the best modern Welsh air, of which she herself was the composer. In addition to these ladies, Lady Hall, of Llanover (*Gwenynen Gwent*), never relaxes her efforts to assist and promote the welfare of this society, and Sir Benjamin Hall and herself render Llanover a point of re-union, on these occasions, for all their distant friends who are interested in the proceedings of the Abergavenny Eisteddfodau, and anxious to attend them. Besides the above, we must not forget the vicinity of the Rev. T. Price, of Cwmdû, a Welsh scholar, and an antiquary of great eminence, who has ever given his best services to the cause of national literature, and is the author of the most complete History of Wales of modern date. Within twenty miles also resides Taliesin, the son of the well-known bard, Iolo Morganwg, whose collection of Welsh MSS. is most valuable and extensive. And last, but not least, within a day’s journey, is the mansion of Sir S. Rush Meyrick, whose literary reputation need not be here adverted to, and who is now, with his usual patriotism and liberality, engaged in editing (gratis) those curious genealogical MSS. called the Visitations of Lewis Dwnn, for the Welsh MSS. Society, which took its birth entirely from the concourse of literati brought together by the Abergavenny meetings. To sum up this peculiar combination, as regards the contiguity of so many individuals circumstanced and qualified to support such national gatherings, we must not pass over the vicinity of the Llandovery Press, conducted by Mr. Rees, (whose family has been remarkable for learning,) and which is equal, if not superior, to any establishment of the same kind in Great Britain. Mr. Rees is himself a man of considerable information, an excellent Welsh scholar, and a true patriot. His aim has been to make the Llandovery Press pre-eminent for the perfection of its works, and has succeeded. He employs his own countrymen

only;* and the *Mabinogion* and the *Liber Landavensis* are alone sufficient to justify the title he has obtained of "The Elzevir of Wales." All the works brought out by the Welsh MSS. Society are published by Mr. Rees, at Llandovery, which again is sufficiently near Abergavenny to be peculiarly convenient to the editors in the neighbourhood.

Having given a sketch of the objects of the Abergavenny Cymreigydion, and mentioned a few of its fruits, in the amount of mind which it has brought into operation, the stimulus given to native literature by the valuable works it has been the means of producing, the revival of national music, the improvement of native manufactures, together with the promotion of social intercourse between persons of all creeds, of all parties, on the *one point of neutral ground* still remaining where all may meet in amity, as well as the general benefit to the town, we will conclude by a sketch of the proceedings at these festivals. The Eisteddfodau have hitherto been held at Abergavenny, in temporary rooms erected for the purpose, or in a marquee, in consequence of the town not being possessed of a hall sufficiently large for such an assembly. But that inconvenience is now obviated by the public spirit of Mr. E. Lewis, of Abergavenny, who has recently completed a building, which is rented by the committee of the society, and is called the Cymreigydion Hall. It is believed to be the largest apartment in the county, and will contain 2000 persons. The appearance of the town on these occasions is most exhilarating. The inns are decorated with flags and wreaths of flowers, and gigantic leeks, real and artificial, wave in various quarters. The president, attended by all the neighbouring gentry, enters the town in procession, which frequently reaches a mile in length. The post-boys of the principal inns wear jackets of Welsh woollen, of the gayest colours: the horses and servants of the president and principal families have large cockades of green and white ribbon (the colour of the banner of Wales, carried at Bosworth field). The ladies make a point of wearing the national costume, which it is much to be regretted they ever allow to fall into disuse; and

* See Appendix.—(c.)

on this occasion they add much to the picturesqueness and gayety of the scene, by their glossy black beaver hats, their brilliant cloaks and whistles, and other drapery of native manufacture. Every individual who can afford it wears a silver, satin, or pearl leek, in a conspicuous part of his or her dress (generally in the hat of the ladies, and the button-hole of the gentlemen). The president is met outside the town by all the members who are inhabitants, preceded by flags and banners, two-and-two, and a pyramidal car, filled with harpers, drawn by four fine horses, accompanied by the Society of Druids, in full costume. The address being spoken, and replied to by the president, the whole procession slowly files through the town, and the president's taking the chair is announced by a flourish of trumpets, followed by a chorus of harps, playing an ancient Welsh march; after which the proceedings of the day commence. It is scarcely necessary to add, that each branch of trade, more or less, necessarily feels the beneficial effect of the influx of visitors, of all ranks, which these meetings occasion. The proceedings last two days, and there is an ordinary at the principal inns alternately. There is also another opportunity for enjoying the music of the Welsh harpers at the evening meeting, as the hall is re-opened at seven o'clock, and admittance obtained at very moderate prices, to hear their melodies.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ASCENT OF THE BLAWRENG—SCYRRYD VAWR—WERN-DDU—PEN Y VAL
DEBI—RHOLBEN—GRAIG—BRYN-ARW—SKYRRYD VACH—COED Y PRIOR.

“ We climb, we pant, we pause ; again we climb,
Frown not, stern mountain, nor around thee throw,
Thy mist and storm, but look with cloudless brow
O'er all thy giant progeny sublime,
While toiling up the immeasurable height,
We climb, we pant, we pause.”

REV. C. HOYLE, AT BEN NEVIS.

In the ascent of the Blawreng, (*grey ridge*,)* the traveller crosses over the river Usk by an old picturesque stone bridge, which formerly consisted of sixteen arches, but is now limited to eight. A circumstance of rather an interesting character, recorded in his autobiography, occurred here to the celebrated and eccentric Lord Herbert, of Cherbury. It appears that at a time when the rain, descending from the mountains, had swollen the river to a most extraordinary extent, this nobleman, accompanied by a single attendant, had occasion to pass this way. The stream was sweeping and foaming along with unprecedented fury. The well-known skill of Lord Herbert, in guiding the most fiery charger, enabled him to pass the bridge in safety; the servant, however, being terrified by the restiveness of his steed, let slip the bridle, and the horse immediately leaped over the parapet of the bridge into the

* The word Blawreng has been differently translated ; but we cannot quote a more satisfactory authority for *grey* (or blue) *ridge*, than the opinion of the late eminent Welsh antiquary, Mr. Payne, of Crickhowel.

roaring torrent below, when the chivalric and daring spirit of the nobleman was the means of rescuing the poor man from a watery grave. When he saw the precarious state of his attendant, choosing a favourable spot, he dashed in after him, and bore him safely to land. The bridge commands an extensive view of the country around, and a full view of the town of Abergavenny. Having bid good bye to this interesting relic of other days, we turn to the right, and soon find ourselves in the vicinity of the Llanffoist tram-road, the handmaid of commerce, but the ruthless desecrator of nature's loveliness. It trails along the valley a tacit evidence of the existence of that utilitarian philosophy which is now making a vast workshop of Great Britain.

The church of Llanffoist forms an interesting and picturesque object in this ride : it is about a mile and a half from Abergavenny, and is immediately at the foot of the Blawreng. In the churchyard is one of the most aged and remarkable yew trees in the county, which has been the theme of poets. This tree is believed to have existed since the time of the Druids, by a computation of the average growth of yew trees, and its girth. Not far from the church are two old residences, called Upper and Lower Llanffoist, the former belonging to F. H. Williams, Esq., of Coldbrook, and the latter is the paternal inheritance of Mrs. Jones, of Llanarth.

At length we arrive at the place where the inclined planes begin to rise up the side of the Blawreng. These frequently afford a great assistance in climbing the steep. The traveller seats himself in a tram-cart, and is pulled upwards by the force of the loaded carriages descending, by means of a chain which works round a wheel at the top. Thus he accomplishes more than half the distance to the summit of the mountain, a height of 1720 feet, with little effort on his own part. But, Reader ! have you at any time stood upon the summit of one of the mountains of Gwent, and gazed thence on the grand concentration of Welsh and English scenery—hill and dale, river and streamlet, mighty woods and waving corn-fields, and all that can make a landscape lovely ? And have you never felt a warm gush of feeling thrilling your bosom—an almost enthusiastic fervour—

at beholding the sublime and beautiful so gorgeously mingled ? If so, you will readily join with me in lamenting that so few are able to climb and participate in this happiness.

“ Good Heavens ! must scenes like these expand—
Scenes so magnificently grand ;
And millions breathe and pass away
Unbless’d throughout their little day
With one short glimpse.”

Such was the emanation from the bosom of the poet Bloomfield, when in raptures he gazed on the landscape now stretched out before us. The scenery, as viewed from the Blawreng, is magnificent beyond conception. It seems as though Nature had exhausted all her powers on this one spot. There is the rugged rock, and the gracefully undulating plain—here the rich pastures, and there the winding river—yonder the tall woods—and near to them are the waving corn-fields. What could be more happily blended than the craggy greatness of the Scyrryd Vawr—(“ sacred soil ! ”)—with the exuberant luxuriance of its declining slope and valley beneath it ? See the little Scyrryd, further towards the south, covered with the richest foliage. How it smiles, as it were,—

“ On the dun peak of Pen-y-Vâl,”

which appears northwards, and

“ Stands like a sentinel, whose brow
Soows on the sleeping world below.”

The gentle risings of the ground form so pleasing a contrast with the rougher parts of the scenery, that the eye is delighted wherever it rests. Far southward may be dimly seen the Bristol channel ; while opposite, the verdant vale of Crickhowel stretches to a point in the distant perspective :—

“ The scene is clothed in beauty ; and the soul,
No longer lingering in the gloom of care,
Doth greet Creation’s smile. The grey clouds roll
E’en from the mountain peaks, and melt the air !
The landscape looks an Eden ! Who could wear
The frown of sorrow now ? This glorious hour
Reveals the ruling God ! The heavens are bare !
Each sunny stream and blossom-marked bower
Breathes of pervading love, and proves the Power
That spoke him into life hath bless’d man’s earthly dower.”

This mountain is rendered interesting on many accounts: it forms a termination to the great mineral basin of South Wales, and is situated in what was formerly termed "The Wilds of Monmouthshire." Here terminates the valley Avon Llwyd, named from the stream running through it. From its bowels the Blaenafon, the Garnddyrys, and in some measure, the Nantyglo Iron Works, extract their wealth.

The *Scyrryd Vawr*, or Holy Mountain, rises 1498 feet above the level of the sea. In the distance it has a strange and wild appearance—bold and rugged, and presents a singular mixture of the sublime and beautiful. It rears its bare brow into the heavens, and veils its top in the fleecy clouds, sloping down gracefully to the valley, with fields of the brightest verdure at its feet. It is made the more striking in its appearance by the immense fissure that is observed in its side, splitting the mountain, as it were, into two parts. What has been the cause of this has been an enquiry frequently made; and various have been the suppositions laid down. It has been said to have occurred at the time of the crucifixion of our Saviour, when "the rocks were rent." Others have thought that this strange phenomenon was occasioned by numerous springs undermining the foundation, until the vast masses being deprived of support, have, with a mighty crash, separated from each other, and the mountain seems to have been rent asunder. Similar occurrences have been observed in the Alps. These phenomena, known by the name of Landslips in England, frequently happen in Wales. Others, with a greater appearance of truth, have imagined that it must have arisen at the time of the deluge; when the earth, disrupted, was overwhelmed by the waters, had its shattered parts replaced, and by the power of adhesion and compression, underwent a complete alteration. When the exhaling power of the sun was again in action, the sudden expansion of the aqueous particles caused immense rents and chasms to be formed in proportion to the exhaling power. These hypothesis have been advanced, but, we think, do not satisfactorily account for the phenomenon. If the mountain be closely examined, it will be found that its surface is covered with small slips, which could not have been produced by either of the

causes mentioned. It appears to us that it arose from a long continued descent of rain, which, sinking deeply into the earth, loosened its particles, and, being of a loose sandy nature, divided the side from the main body. Such cases are by no means unfrequent amongst the mountains around, but the most striking instance is that of the Darren, in the Vale of Ewais—we have traced nearly fifty of these slips on its side. Whatever may have been the cause, there it stands as a remarkable natural curiosity. On the top may be plainly traced the site of a chapel, which was dedicated to St. Michael; hence it is sometimes called St. Michael's mount. It has long been a practice with Roman Catholics to repair thither on Michaelmas eve, for devotional purposes. The earth is still, by some of that persuasion, considered sacred, and is placed in the coffins, and thrown into the graves of the deceased. Some years ago, a notion was prevalent that it had the power of curing diseases. "As you pass along its side," said a late eminent writer, "the mountain presents the appearance of a giant's grave;"—mayhap, a descendant of the great Arthur, who fixed his throne upon the mountain tops, and is said to have been able to spring from the summit of Twm Barlwm into Pembrokeshire. It is certain such a mausoleum would be rather too capacious for an ordinary son of Anak, or Goliath, were it probable one of them was buried in this spot.

The view from the top of the Scyrryd is by many preferred to that from the Pen-y-Vâl, inasmuch as the Pen-y-Vâl itself forms the principal feature in the picture. The distance from Abergavenny to the summit is about two-and-a-half miles. The remains of the ancient mansion of Wern-ddû might be visited in returning. It is situated about two miles from the town, and is now occupied by farmers. There is a famous old well near to the house,—“Efynnon Wern-ddû,”—the water of which is still considered as possessing medicinal virtues. We may here appropriately repeat the entertaining anecdote illustrative of the pride of Welsh ancestry, which is mentioned by Coxe, of Mr. Proger, the last male descendant of Jenkin ap Gwylim who inhabited Wern-ddû, the residence of his ancestors, the lords of Llanllowel and Llandeilo. Mr. Proger accidentally met a stranger at the foot of

the Scyrryd, who made various enquiries respecting the country, the prospects, and the neighbouring houses, and, among others asked, " Whose is this antique mansion before us?" " That, sir, is Wern-ddû, a very ancient house, for out of it came the Earls of Pembroke, of the first line, and the Earls of Pembroke, of the second line; the Lord Herbert, of Cherbury; the Herberts of Coldbrook, Rhymny, Caerdiff, and York; the Morgans, of Acton; the Earl of Hunsdon; the Jones's, of Iscowen and Llanarth, and all the Powels. Out of this house also, by the female line, came the Dukes of Beaufort." " And pray, sir, who lives there now?" " I do, sir." " Then pardon me, and accept a piece of advice—Come out of it yourself, or it will tumble and crush you."

It will not be misplaced to add another anecdote, given by the same author, in relation to this individual, and his cousin, Mr. Powel, of Perthir, who lived at another ancient residence belonging to a branch of the same family, near Monmouth:—Mr. Proger, dining with a friend at Monmouth, proposed riding back to Wern-ddû in the evening, but his friend objecting, because it was late, and likely to rain, Mr. Proger replied, " With regard to the lateness of the hour, we shall have moon-light, and should it happen to rain, Perthir is not far from the road, and my cousin Powel will, I am sure, give us a night's lodging." They accordingly mounted their horses, but being soon overtaken by a violent shower, rode to Perthir, and found all the family retired to rest. Mr. Proger, however, calling to his cousin, Mr. Powel opened the window, and looking out, asked, " In the name of wonder what means all this noise—who is there?" " It is I, your cousin Proger, of Wern-ddû, who am come to your hospitable door for shelter from the inclemency of the weather, and hope you will be so kind as to give me and my friend a lodging." " What! is it you, Cousin Proger?—you and your friend shall be instantly admitted, but upon one condition, that you will allow (and never hereafter dispute) that I am the head of the family." " What did you say?" returned Mr. Proger. " Why, I say if you expect to pass the night in my house, you must allow that I am the head of the family." " No sir, I never would admit that: were it to rain swords and daggers I would ride this night to Wern-ddû rather than

lower the consequence of my family,—Come up, Bald ! come up !” “Stop a moment, Cousin Proger—have you not often confessed that the first Earl of Pembroke (of the name of Herbert,) was the youngest son of Perthir, and will you set yourself above the Earls of Pembroke ?” “True, I must give place to the Earl of Pembroke, because he is a peer of the realm ; but still, though a peer, he is the youngest branch of my family, being descended from the *fourth* son of Wern-ddû, who was *your* ancestor, and settled at Perthir, whereas I am descended from the eldest son : indeed, my cousin Jones, of Llanarth, is of an older branch than you, and yet he never disputes that I am the head of the family.” “Why, Cousin Proger, I have nothing more to say, so good night to you.” “Stop a moment, Mr. Powel,” said the stranger, “you see how it pours—do admit me, at least : I will not dispute with you about our families.” “Pray, sir, what is your name, and where do you come from ?” “My name is —————, and I come from the county of —————.” “A Saxon, of course : it would be very curious indeed should I dispute with a Saxon about families—no, sir, you must suffer for the obstinacy of your friend, and so a pleasant ride to you both.”

Pen-y-Vdl—(called, also, the Sugar-Loaf Mountain,)—next claims our attention. The word *Vdl* is sometimes considered of doubtful etymology, but it seems to us very evident that it can only be from *Bdl*, a peak—*Pen-y-Vdl*, the summit of the peak ; though, in consequence of *Moel* signifying *bald*, (or *unclothed with wood*,) and the summit of this mountain answering to this description, as well as the adjacent district being called the forest of *Moel*, it has been disputed that it ought to be written and pronounced *Pen-y-Voel*. But we are inclined to dissent from this opinion, on the ground that the Welsh themselves pronounce it *Pen-y-Vdl*, although they call the district *Moel*. The ascent to this mountain may be made on foot or on horseback, to within a very short distance from the top : it is altogether about two miles from Abergavenny. In ascending, about a mile out of the town, we pass two very beautifully situated residences on the right and left of the road. The one on the left hand is the property of Miss Herbert, (the foundress of the church before described,) and

the other belongs to Philip Jones, third son of the late J. Jones, of Llanarth, Esq. The Pen-y-Vâl is the most beautiful and striking mountain-object in the neighbourhood; and though the scenery viewed from its top is less extensive and varied than that from the summit of its neighbour, the Scyrryd Vawr, it is more generally frequented by the inhabitants of Abergavenny in their pleasure-excursions. A singular and interesting fact, in connection with this mountain, may here be mentioned:—Near to the top, and about 1750 feet above the river, three springs take their rise, the waters of which, on the hottest summer-day, retain an intensity of cold that is astonishing. These, after flowing separately some distance, unite in one; and other springs, bursting out of the side of the mountain, flow into it and swell its current. The stream flows on as far as the Well of Llwyn-ddû, where the current is again increased by the junction of another spring, which has become in some degree famous for its medicinal properties, but which, unfortunately, is left in a neglected state, the spring thus having become a rivulet,—the rivulet a brook,—

“Babbling down the mountain’s side,”

through the most romantic dingle in the neighbourhood, mantled with thickets, and enlivened by the splash of its waters;* from Llwyn-ddû, the brook becomes a current, and dashes onwards to the town, supplying the inhabitants with water. The view from the Pen-y-Vâl is so vast and extensive that it is impossible to attempt a description of it, beyond saying that northwards appears the magnificent range of the Black Mountains; westwards is seen the Blawreng; directly south, the Bristol Channel; and eastwards, a beautiful champaign country, rich with green fields and gentle uplands. This mountain, from different positions, assumes a great variety of appearances. It looks like a sharp ridge from the opposite side of the Usk; sometimes it has a globular shape; and at others,—particularly in a south-easterly direction,—it presents to the eye almost a perfect pyramid. This mountain is 1852 feet above the Gavenny.

* The writer has, on many occasions, as he ascended the mountain, followed the course of the brooklet, and he would advise the tourist to do the same; and if he return by the same path, after sunset, he will have the nightingales for his companions.

The *Deri* (named from the oaks), the *Rhôlben*, and the *Graig*, form, as it were, a base to the cone-like peak, which is properly called the Pen-y-Vâl. They are near together, and can be included in the same excursion; though of minor dimensions, their ascent will well repay the trouble, from the beautiful scenery on the road. On the eastern side of the Deri is situated Treily Court, the residence of J. Fielder, Esq., whence there is one of the best views of the Scyrryd Vawr.

The *Bryn Arw* (*the rugged hill*), is north-eastwards of the Deri, 800 feet above the Gavenny. A singular grove of Spanish chesnuts is to be noticed in proceeding to the top of it, and seems to have been planted at the same time as those at Llanvihangel, as they appear to be about the same age.

The *Scyrryd Vach* (Little Scyrryd) rises about half a mile from the town, in a southern direction, and is 765 feet 3 inches above the Gavenny. It forms part of Coldbrook-park, the summit commands some of the most exquisite views of Abergavenny and the surrounding scenery that can be obtained. It is a desirable point for an evening's ramble.

The beautiful little mountain, known as *Coed-y-Prior*, is about two miles from Abergavenny. We would recommend the traveller to ascend from Lower Llanffoist, and, turning to the right, cross the canal bridge, from which a lane (once the old road to Blaenavon,) leads circuitously to the common, on the top of Coed-y-Prior, and another lane descends on the other side, whence the turnpike road leading from Abergavenny to Pont-y-pool may be gained by re-crossing the canal, and passing through the farm-yard of the mill of Felin Ocran, which is close to the Porth Mawr entrance to Llanover. The views of Abergavenny and the surrounding mountains are probably finer in the direction above Llanffoist, than from any other place. The Coed-y-Prior is of a round form, partly covered with woods of beech, oak, and birch. Its name indicates that it belonged to the priory—(*the woods of the priory*),—and a large part of it is now the property of C. Kemys Tynte, Esq., who also is the possessor of the priory at Abergavenny. The iron-works of Blaenavon are within two miles of the summit of Coed-y-Prior.

CHAPTER V.

EXCURSION TO LLANTHONY—LLANVIHANGEL COURT—OLD CASTLE—
LORD COBHAM—THE VALE OF HONDDU—LLANTHONY ABBEY.

“Small though it be, when compared with many of the endowments of our land, I will say this Abbeye of ours hath a pleasant site, and seems well arranged for the comfort and peace of them that dwell therein. It ever seemed to me better fitted for religious men than for warriors. It lieth here low and secluded, as piety loveth to lie.”—WILLIAM DE ALBINI.

“Rise with the sun,
And take a breakfast of the morning dew.”

In guiding the traveller through the neighbourhood of Abergavenny, after he has taken a general view of the beautiful scenery from one of the mountain tops, we would recommend him to examine it in detail, and, in the first instance, ride, walk, or drive, as far as the Abbey of Llanthony, a distance of ten miles from Abergavenny.

After passing the Abergavenny nursery-grounds, (the proprietor of which, in his choice of flowers and their beautiful arrangement, seems to vie with the glories told in eastern tales,) we come in sight of the Scyrryd Vawr. At the north-western end of this mountain is situated the village of Llanvihangel Crucorney. Llanvihangel Court (the residence of the Hon. W. P. Rodney,) is one of the oldest mansions in the county. It is uncertain when the original building was erected, but the south-eastern front is known to have been re-built in the year 1559, by Rhys Morgan, the then proprietor of the estate. He, in 1576, sold the property

to Nicholas Arnold, the proprietor of Llanthony Abbey and its dependencies, who held the same under grant from Henry VIII. The property remained in the Arnold family till the year 1726, when it, together with that of Llanthony, was sold to the Hon. Edward Harley, Auditor of Imprest to Queen Anne, brother to Robert, first Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, the Lord High Treasurer, from which time, to the year 1802, it remained in the Harley family, the mansion being usually assigned as the jointure house for the widows of the Earls of Oxford. In 1802, the mansion, with the contiguous portion of the property, including the Scyrryd mountain, was sold to the late Hugh Powell, Esq., treasurer of St. Bartholomew's hospital, by the present Earl of Oxford. Mr. Powell died in 1821, unmarried, and, as is generally supposed, out of respect for the Harley family, but more particularly as a token of gratitude to his patron and friend, the late Right Hon. Thomas Harley, he bequeathed to the grandson of that gentleman, (the Hon. W. P. Rodney, the present owner,) the mansion, together with the principal portion of his landed estates. The mansion is surrounded by groves of venerable oaks and Spanish chesnuts, while the noble avenues of firs, (supposed to be the finest in the kingdom,) give a weird picturesqueness to the scene that is very striking. The government, on one occasion, offered Mr. Powell £10,000. for these alone. They are not the common Scotch firs, as some have been led to believe, but of a kind which are very seldom met with. At Llanvihangel they sow themselves, and spring up spontaneously in the woods. The chesnuts appear to be also of great antiquity; but although much pains have been taken to gain information as to the possible date when these avenues were planted, hitherto all researches on the point have proved fruitless.

Old Castle is about four miles from Llanvihangel, and is situated on the slope of the Black Mountains. This castle is well worthy of the traveller's attention upon more than one account—it has been supposed, by some writers, that a fortress was erected on this spot prior to the Norman invasion, by a British chieftain, about the ninth century, and was co-existent with Castel Gwyn (White Castle). Gale and Stukeley fix it as the site of the Roman

station *Blestium*; and it is probable that it was seized by the Romans to defend their road leading from *Gobannium* (Abergavenny) to *Magna Castra* (Kenchester), which passed this way. But its chief point of interest is that it was the residence of the remarkable and celebrated Sir John Oldcastle—Lord Cobham, whom Horace Walpole calls “the first author, as well as the first martyr, among our nobility.” He was a man of extraordinary talents, and the most indomitable stability of soul, evinced in the defence of the principles of the Reformation, which, while it was destitute, to a wonderful degree, of bigotry of spirit, was not to be abated by threats or persecution. In early life, he was the companion of King Henry V., then prince, and manifested in his life the same dissolute turn of mind. When that monarch ascended the throne, and expressed himself determined to discard all his wicked associates, Lord Cobham was induced to reflect on the nature of the course he was pursuing, and this reflection resulted in a total abandonment of his vicious conduct, and an espousal of the doctrines then termed Lollardism. While defending his peculiar opinions, he was accused of heresy, convicted, condemned, and suffered punishment at the stake, with a resolution worthy of a hero and a christian. Foolish stories are told of a fanatical enthusiasm which he manifested at his death, but they evidently proceed from an enemy. The old castle, the residence of this celebrated man, was taken down some years ago, and a farmhouse constructed of the materials. Slight vestiges of circular entrenchments may still be observed near the church, but though there may be little to gratify the antiquary, the traveller will find the picturesqueness of the situation, and the fine scenery it commands, ample reward for the time he may spend in reaching it.

Two miles from Llanvihangel is *Campston*, which, it is said, once formed an asylum for the unfortunate Charles I.; but, in the *Iter Carolum*, which describes his progress, it only says that he dined there.

Four miles from Campston, on the Abergavenny and Hereford road, is *Langua*, the site of an alien priory of Black Monks, a cell to the Abbey Lira, in Normandy, but nothing of the building remains.

Having passed the village of Llanvihangel, we turn to the left, into the vale of Honddû, where

"The oak's thick branches stretch
A broader, browner shade,
And where the rude and moss-grown beech
O'er canopies the glade."

Alas ! alas ! that Britons should forsake the land of their sires for a foreign soil, when beauties like these can be found at home. Oh ! sons of the soil, forget not the meek daisy that rises in your green fields, for the gaudy exotic that blooms afar !

There is a flower, a little flower,
With silver crest and golden eye,
That welcomes every changing hour,
And weathers every sky.

The prouder beauties of the field
In gay but quick succession shine ;
Race after race their honours yield,
They flourish and decline.

But this small flower, to Nature dear,
While moons and stars their courses run,
Wreathes the whole circle of the year,
Companion of the sun.

It smiles upon the lap of May ;
To sultry Angust spreads its charms ;
Lights pale October on his way,
And twines December's arms.

The purple heath, and golden broom,
On moory mountains catch the gale ;
O'er lawns the lily sheds perfume,
The violet in the vale.

But this bold floweret climbs the hill,
Hides in the forest, haunts the glen ;
Plays on the margin of the rill,
Peeps round the Fox's den.

Within the garden's cultured round
It shares the sweet carnation's bed ;
And blooms on consecrated ground,
In honour of the dead.

The lambkin crops its crimson gem,
The wild-bee murmurs on its breast ;
The blue-fly bends its pensile stem,
That decks the sky-lark's nest.

'Tis Flora's page : in every place,
In every season, fresh and fair,
It opens with perennial grace,
And blossoms every where.

On waste and wood-land, rock and plain,
Its humble buds unheeded rise ;
The rose has but a summer reign,
The daisy never dies.

MONTGOMERY.

What are the glittering glaciers of Alpine scenery—what are the perpetually snow-clad mountain tops to our own rugged, yet beautiful green hills at home? We sit beside the Lake of Como, and while we look upon its placid waters, we forget the tinkling rivulets and their moss-clad banks, whose music we delighted to hear in infancy. We remember no more the stream in which the trout loves to leap! While we tread the vineyards of southern France, we think no more of the deep dell where we delighted to roam—the sylvan homestead, with its orchard white with blossoms—the white-washed village—the old church tower, overgrown with ivy—the aged yew trees—all, all are forgotten. The very language of the home of our early days is almost lost to us. Britons, return to “the native wood-notes wild” of your native valleys. The fields are still green—the trees, through the long bright summer days, wear still their suits of beauty—the river continues to roll on between its banks, lined with Nature’s wildest clothing—the poor, too, are still waiting to hear your voices at their cottage doors.

We venture to say that there is not a more beautiful ride for the lover of nature in the United Kingdom, than that through the vale of the Honddû. The pathway leads between mountains of the most varied description, its banks lined with wild flowers. Beneath the road murmurs the romantic Honddû, its waters tumbling over a hundred mimic cataracts, and

“The trout bedropt with crimson stains,
Forsakes the rivers proud domain,—
Forsakes the sun’s unwelcomme gleam,
To bask within this humble stream.”

Gyraldus Cambrensis, in the 12th century, thus wrote of the Vale of the Honddû:—“A deep valley, quiet and retired for contemplation with the Almighty. Here the sorrowful complaints of the oppressed do not disquiet, nor the mad contentions of the foward do not disturb; but a calm peace and perfect charity invite to holy religion. But why do I describe the situation of the place, when all things are so much changed since the pristine establishment? The broken rocks were traversed by herds of wild and swift-footed animals; these rocks surrounded

and darkened the valley, for they were crowned with tall towering trees, which yielded a delightful prospect at a great distance to all beholders, both by sea and land. The middle of the valley, although clothed with wood, and sunk into a narrow and deep abyss, was sometimes disturbed by strong winds, and at other times obscured by dark clouds and violent rains, incommoded with severe frost, or heaped up with snow, whilst in other places there was a mild and gentle air. The large and plentiful springs from the neighbouring mountains, fell with a pleasing murmur into a river in the midst of the valley, abounding with fish. The spacious mountains contained fruitful pastures and rich meadows for feeding cattle, which compensated for the barrenness of other places, and made amends for the want of corn. The air, though thick, was healthful, and preserved the inhabitants to an extreme old age."

It is one of those spots which appear to be shut out from the universe. It is a lovely valley, indeed! There may be dells where the balmy breeze sheds its thousand sweets upon the traveller, but then it is not so pure, so fresh, as the winds freshened by the waters of the Honddû. "The tall, towering trees"—the rugged "broken rocks"—are still there, and the "plentiful springs" are still heard "falling with a gentle murmur into the river in the midst of the valley." There are "the spacious mountains," the "fruitful pastures," and "green meadows." The simple cottager "descends to the grave like a shock of corn fully ripe." May it be long before the peace of that quiet valley has fled.

At length Llanthony Abbey appears in sight, called by the natives Llan-ddewi-nant Honddû, i. e., St. David's Church of the brook of the Honddû. It is a striking ruin, bold and massive; its character is the great and solid, and differs from Tintern, as the latter consists of the light and beautiful, exhibiting the usual distinction between the styles of the Augustine and Cistercian orders of architecture: the visitor is especially struck with its bare appearance. Its situation is lovely, but that companion of ruins, the ivy, does not trail along its top, or cling to its massive fragments; here and there, it is true, it may be traced, but only

where a new stone has been laid ; so soon as it reaches the ancient stone-work, it turns back again to the earth, as though it were too sacred for its touch. No aged yews, like dark images of the past, add gloom to its venerable appearance ; but it stands truly in solitary sublimity—"It lieth here, low and secluded, as piety loveth to lie." The voices of the sweeping blast and murmuring Honddû are the only sounds that disturb its silence.

Leland observes, "Nanthondde, a priori of blake chanons, standeth in the Vale of Ewais, xiii. miles from Brekenok. This priori was fair, and stood betwixt ii. great hilles." The time of the erection of this abbey has occasioned many disputes, and much confusion has arisen respecting it from the varied accounts. One has supposed that it was built by Sir W. H. de Lacy, a retainer of the Earl of Hereford, who gave lands to him here. From this knight descended the Lacies, who were noticed amongst the first conquerors of Ireland. Another said it was founded by Ervistus, a priest, and William, a soldier, retainers of the Earl of Hereford. These became hermits, and resolved to lead a secluded life. At first they would only take a benevolence of their patron, to erect a small chapel, which they commenced in the year 1108 ; but afterwards Ervistus, influenced by the advice of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, persuaded his companion to convert it into a convent, for regular canons of the Augustine order.

The following particulars, which may not be uninteresting to the reader, are derived from an account of the foundation and history of the abbey (Dugdale's *Monasticon*), from the observations of Gyraldus Cambrensis, and others :—

St. David, the uncle of King Arthur, the titular saint of Wales, withdrawing from the cares of the world, retired to this wild spot, as the scene of his devotion. Here he built a small chapel and hermitage, but subsequent to his death the cell was untenanted, and the place was long unfrequented. In the time of William Rufus, Hugh de Laci, a Norman baron, in a hunting excursion, pursued the deer into this valley ; and, whilst resting himself after the fatigues of the chase with his companions, William, one of his retainers, discovered the ruined chapel of St. David, suddenly experienced a desire to lead a religious life, and, strongly impressed

by the sanctity of the spot, quitted his military career, and here devoted his life to the service of God. After he had passed a few years in this solitude, and obtained devotional celebrity, Ernesi, chaplain to Maud, Queen of Henry I., was induced to join William as an associate in his retirement. By their combined efforts a chapel was erected, and was consecrated by Naban, the diocesan, and Hameline, Bishop of Hereford, 1108, and dedicated to St. John the Baptist. At the request of Ernesi, soon after, Hugh de Laci, of Hereford, founded an Augustine Priory, and dedicated it to the same saint as the chapel was originally, and Ernesi became prior. Henry I. and his Queen became its benefactors, and, thus patronised, the new monastery quickly was famed for extraordinary sanctity, and both donations and bequests rapidly multiplied. At first the numerous offers were rejected by the prior and his pious brethren, with the reason that they had determined to die poor in the house of God; but this reluctance having been overcome by the request of Maud, extensive buildings were erected, and the conventional church constructed, which Gyraldus Cambrensis described as "a good building, having its roof vaulted with stone, and covered with lead." Its prosperity was but of short duration. On the death of Henry I., the wars between Stephen and the Empress Maud extended their baleful influence even to this spot; the monks were insulted, and their edifice pillaged by the Welsh, who seized this opportunity of shewing their hatred to the English. In this distress the monks applied to their prior, who was Robert de Betune, Bishop of Hereford. He, with the aid of Milo de Laci, and his own liberal donations, enabled them to erect a new monastery, at a place called Hyde, near Gloucester, which was consecrated by the Bishops of Worcester and Hereford in 1136. This was called Llanthony, which name the ruin now bears. The new monastery was only a cell, similar to the original one in the Vale of Ewais, but having been endowed with large possessions by Milo and King John, it soon arose to celebrity and splendour. Delighted with this new and luxuriant situation, the monks forgot their seat in the mountains, and not only refused to return, as they promised in their engagements, but demanded for the modern establishment pre-eminence over the mother church. The latter

was stripped of its valuables to enrich the former, and converted into a house of correction for refractory monks. This desolate state of the abbey induced Edward IV. to unite the two monasteries by charter, making at the same time the one at Gloucester the abbey, and the other a cell attached to it, and obliged the monks of the principal house to maintain one residentiary prior and four canons. It has, however, been questioned whether this was ever effected; this is sanctioned by the fact, that the annual revenues were *separately* valued at the time of the dissolution of monasteries;—the one near Gloucester, £648. 19s. 1½d., and this in Monmouthshire at £71. 3s. 2d., according to Dugdale. The site was granted to Richard Arnold, and came into the possession of the Oxford family by Auditor Harley having purchased it from the grantee. It is at present the property of Walter Savage Landor, Esq., the poet, now in Italy.

Little now remains of this monastery but the ruins of its conventional church. In the Additions to Gough's Camden, it is stated that the present edifice is not the original church belonging to the abbey, but one of later date:—The church, however, was evidently constructed soon after the period when the pointed style was introduced, and previous to its general adoption; for both that and the circular are seen in this structure, and appear to have entered into the original plan. It was built cruciform, and, though not on the grandest scale, was admirably proportioned. The length from the W. door is 202 feet, and breadth, including the two aisles, 50. The length of transept from W. to S. 100 feet. The whole building is in a sadly ruined state—the walls are gradually falling down. In the centre there rose a square massy tower, supported by bold pointed arches opening into the choir, nave, and transept. But the abbey is “a tale of the times of old;” and it is grievous to observe, that it is *not to time alone* that the ravages of the last fifty years are attributable. The engravings given by Sir R. C. Hoare, of Llanthony, in his edition of Gyralodus Cambrensis, give the best idea of any we are acquainted with of its remains within the present century, and since he drew them they have much decreased.

The farm-house attached to the ruin is inhabited by kind-hearted persons of the name of Webb; and in their small parlour and spacious kitchen, parties who come to see the abbey are supplied with eggs, bacon, toasted cheese, tea, bread and butter, &c. Mr. Webb is always ready to enliven with his violin those who are inclined to dance.

CHAPTER VI.

EXCURSION TO RAGLAN CASTLE—COLD BROOK—LLANSANFRAED—CLYTHA—
LLANARTH—RAGLAN CASTLE.

“A famous castle fine,
That Ragland height, stands motted almost round ;
Made of freestone, upright as straight as line,
Whose workmanship, in beautie doth abound,
The curious knots, wrought all with edged toole,
The stately tower, that looks o'er pond and poole ;
The fountaine trim that runs both day and night,
Doth yield in shewe a rare and noble sight.”

CHURCHYARD.

“Every traveller is to be envied who has yet to see Ragland Castle for the first time, as a moment of unspeakable delight awaits him. No place can present a more interesting combination of architectural beauty, picturesque scenery, and historical associations. A painter might cover the walls of his studio with sketches of Ragland, and not exhaust the subject.”

“HILL AND VALLEY,” BY MISS C. SINCLAIR.

LEAVING Abergavenny by the Monmouth road, we pass beneath the *Scyrryd Vach*, a small mountain of great beauty, which forms part of the grounds of the ancient mansion of Coldbrook, and commands one of the finest views in the county. The park and shrubberies are remarkable for the beauty of the trees, many of which have been selected by artists as studies. The present proprietor, Ferdinand Hanbury Williams, Esq., is too well known, and too much respected, to require any eulogium here; and his long line of British ancestors is noticed in the account of the ancient monuments, in St. Mary’s Church, Abergavenny. The present mansion was the birth-place of two gentlemen who rose to great celebrity in the age in which they lived—Sir Richard Herbert, who has been termed “the intrepid soldier and the rose of chivalry,” and Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, “the polished courtier, and

the votary of wit and pleasure!" It is not determined when the mansion was erected, but it is evident that it was at an early period. It was once the seat of the Herbert family, but passed from the possession of one of the descendants of Sir Richard Herbert to Major Hanbury, and settled upon his third son, Charles, who, in consequence of the nature of the will, took the name of Williams. This gentleman, afterwards so celebrated, was born in the year 1709, educated at Eton, and afterwards travelled through the greater part of Europe. On his return in 1732 he married Lady Frances, youngest daughter of Lord Coningsby. The following year he took his seat in parliament, and the extraordinary sagacity of his mind soon displaying itself, he became intimate with Lord Orford and the Fox's, with others of the most public characters of the day. The vivacity of his mind at this period vented itself in the shape of political ballads and satires. In 1746 he was installed Knight of the Bath, and afterwards appointed envoy to the court of Dresden. Here he became distinguished in his character of foreign minister. As a person possessing, in a high degree, all the qualities which constitute a skilful diplomatist, he was despatched on an embassy to the court of St. Petersburg. He accomplished the object of his mission, but in consequence of a change in the ministry at home, his reward was an expression of disapprobation. On his return in 1757 he retired to Coldbrook House, and in a short time died, aged 50. As he left only two daughters, his brother George succeeded to the estate; thence it descended to his son, John Hanbury Williams, Esq. The mansion originally was built in an irregular style, with a tower at each angle. The northern front, with an elegant portico, was constructed by Sir C. H. Williams. It contains some very valuable paintings, by Vandyke and others, of remarkable personages—Henrietta, queen of Charles I., Oliver Cromwell, William and Mary, George II., Duke of Cumberland, Sir Robert Walpole, Frederick II., Lord Hervey, Lord Cataret, &c., One room is hung with the celebrated beauties of the reign of King Charles II. There is a magnificent marble chimney-piece, and some valuable china, collected by Sir C. Hanbury Williams. There is also a curious oak chimney-piece, which formerly belonged to Raglan Castle.

Further on we pass the ancient small and picturesque church of Llansanfraed, with the old form of belfry so much admired in many of the Welsh country churches. The cross in the church-yard was restored by the Right Rev. Dr. Copplestone, the present Bishop of Llandaff. The following sepulchral inscription is interesting, as connected with the Herbert family;—

WHERE this place is entered these dead bodies interr'd:

THOM: GLM: JENK: ESQ. 8° IVL: 1438 & MARY HIS WIFE DAU TO SR: JOHN MOR
LEY KNIGHT & HIS COHE: PHIL: THERE SONE & HEIRE 9°: NO: 1460 AND IOHAN
HIS WIFE DA & HEIRE OF THO: BLETHIN OF PENTER, ESQ 7° IVN: 1438:

DAVID THERE SONE & HEIRE 19°: DE: 1510: KATH: HIS WIFE DA: TO SR: ROGER VAW =
AN KNIGHT 26: MAR: 1520: THOM: THERE SONE & HEIRE 3°: APR: 1537: 8
LANE HIS WIFE: DA: TO JOHN TWO OF TRE OWEN ESQ: 13°: AUG: 1533: JOHN

THERE SONS & HEIRE 30°: MARI: 1553: BUT GWEN HIS WIFE DA: TO
EDWA: JONES OF ABERGA: GEN: WAS BURIED IN HER BROTHER EDWAES
SEPVLCRER ON THE NORTHR SIDE OF THE HIGHIE ALTAR IN SAINT MARIES
THERE: 23: SEP: 1597: WALTER THEIRE SONE AND HEIRE 17°: APR: 1606 AND
LETTIS HIS WIFE DA: OF JOHN WILLMS, OF NEWPO: gen: 19° JAN: 1623.

W *

FOR AN ETERNAL TOKEN OF RESPECT
TO YOV MY SIRE, THESE STONES DOE I ERECT:
YOVE WORTHY BONES DESERV OF ME IN BRASS;
A RARE TOMBE THEN STATELY HALTON HAS:
BUT SITHE MY MENES NO PART OF SUCH AVOIDS
INSTEDE THEREOF ACCEPT THIS TOMBE OF WORDS.

* I *
1624.

A stately mansion formerly stood near the church, which was remarkable as once being the seat of the celebrated Thomas ap Gwylim, from whom the Earls of Pembroke, Powys, and Caernarvon are descended by the male, and the Beaufort family by the female line. He acquired it by his marriage with Maud, daughter of Sir John Morley. The present house belongs to the Llanarth family, and is in the occupation of E. T. Hutchins, Esq.

Next on the right is seen the mansion of Pantygoitre, belonging to Miss Morgan. It is situated on the opposite bank of the Usk, and is striking from the extensive and varied landscape by which it is surrounded, and the magnificent woods in the back ground.

Still further on the left-hand stands Llanarth, the hospitable residence of the Jones's, one of the most ancient Catholic families in Wales,* who have been enabled, through a long series of generations, whilst strictly adhering to their ancient faith, to retain their extensive possessions, and at the same time to enjoy the esteem, respect, and good-will of their neighbours, of every class and denomination. The mansion is so embosomed by fine woods that it is not visible from the road. Amongst the pictures of this house is one of Pope's, Sophia Fermor, of whom he said,—

" High on her breast a radiant cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore."

Attached to the house is a chapel, in which mass is regularly performed by the domestic chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Fisher; and it is attended by the Catholics in the neighbourhood, in addition to the members of the family.

Again, on the left-hand, we pass Clytha, the mansion of William Jones, third son of the late T. Jones, of Llanarth, Esq. This fabric was erected a few years ago by the present possessor, who inherited the estate from his uncle, the late William Jones,

* Descended from Henry Fitz-Herbert, chamberlain to King Henry I., the common ancestor of all the Herberts. In the reign of Henry VIII., William ap John first adopted the English custom of a fixed surname, and John has since been altered into Jones. Adam Fitz-Herbert, Lord of Llanllowel, married the daughter of Gwaryndû, Lord of Llandeilo, whose descendant, William Proger, sold the estate of Wern-ddû, reserving the use of it during his life to Mr. Lee, father of the present Mrs. Jones, of Llanarth.

Esq., of Clytha. Opposite this residence, on a wooded hill, in the grounds, stands Clytha Castle, a modern structure, erected, according to the inscription on the tablet inserted in the castle wall, by the late William Jones, Esq., in memory of his wife, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Morgan, of Tredegar, and grand-daughter of William, second Duke of Devonshire. The view, as the traveller passes under the bridge which unites the grounds on each side of the road, forms a magnificent panorama when looking towards the mountains, which then first burst all at once upon the sight in coming from Monmouth to Abergavenny.

About three miles further is the small village of Raglan, with a very picturesque church. There is an inn where parties can be well accommodated ; but it is more generally customary to take cold provisions to the castle, where there is a comfortable room for rest and refreshment. To those who have never visited Raglan Castle, it is impossible to give an idea of the peculiar union of massive magnificence with ruin which is so striking in its remains. Every portion that is standing is so perfect that the stones seem almost as if recently chiselled, so clean is their surface, so perfectly are they fitted together ; while the contrast afforded by other parts rent asunder by violence, and covered with masses of the finest ivy, produce an effect that can very seldom be found in any other old castle. The ruin is altogether one-third of a mile in circumference. The shell incloses two courts, the one denominated the paved and the other the fountain court. In the latter formerly stood a pedestal, upon which was the statue of a horse, carved in a curious sulphureous-smelling stone, from which a fountain issued. The former was paved ; now, however, the green turf alone appears. Around the eastern and northern sides were ranges of culinary offices, and along the southern side was a grand suite of apartments. To the north of the hall were butteries, and beyond these another series of apartments. The western door opened into the chapel, and beyond is a second court, skirted by a range of buildings, which, during the siege, served for barracks. "*Twyr Melyn Gwent*," or the Yellow Tower of Gwent, the citadel, is a large hexagon, defended by bastions, surrounded by a moat, and connected with the castle by a drawbridge. A spiral

staircase leads to the top. Round it there formerly existed a terrace, which was ornamented by statues of the Roman emperors. Around the castle are walks of great extent and beauty, one of which was a favourite with the unfortunate Charles I. The magnificence of the apartments, their extent and number, afford abundant evidence of the style in which the worthy lords of this domain, in the olden time, did the honours of the table. Never, we imagine, were scenes of festivity more frequent than within the walls of Raglan. From the following records of the Marquis of Worcester's establishment, we should have judged it rather to have been the residence of a sovereign than a subject:—

LIST OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF HENRY, THE FIRST MARQUIS OF WORCESTER, AT RAGLAN CASTLE.

"At eleven o'clock in the forenoon the castle gates were shut, and the tables laid, viz.,—two in the dining-room, three in the hall, one in Mrs. Watson's apartment, where the chaplains eat (Sir Toby Matthews being the first), and two in the house-keeper's room, for the ladies' women. The Earl entered the dining-room, attended by his gentlemen. As soon as he was seated, Sir Ralph Blackstone, steward of the house, retired. The comptroller, Mr. Holland, attended with his staff, as did the sewer, Mr. Blackburn; the daily waiters, Mr. Clough, Mr. Jelly, Mr. Scudamore, and many gentlemen's sons, with estates of from two to seven hundred pounds a-year, who were bred up in the castle; my lady's gentlemen of the chamber, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Fox. At the first table sate the noble family, and such of the nobility as came there. At the second table, in the dining-room, sate the knights and honourable gentlemen, attended by footmen. In the hall, at the first table, sate Robert Blackstone, steward; the comptroller, Mr. Holland; the secretary; the master of the horse, Mr. Delawar; the master of the fish-ponds, Mr. Audreys; my Lord Herbert's preceptor, Mr. Adams; with such gentlemen as came there under the degree of a knight, attended by footmen, and plentifully served with wine. At the second table in the hall, served from my lord's table, and with other hot meats, sate the sewer, with the gentlemen waiters and pages, to the number of twenty-four. At the third table in the hall, sate the clerk of the kitchen, with the yeomen officers of the house, two grooms of the chambers, &c. Other officers of the household were, chief auditor, Mr. Smith; clerk of the accounts, Mr. George Whithorn; purveyor of the castle, Mr. Salisbury; ushers of the hall, Mr. Mayle and Mr. Cooke; closet-keeper; gentleman of the chapel, Mr. Davies; keeper of the records; master of the wardrobe; master of the armoury; twelve master grooms of the stables, for the war-horses; master of the hounds; master falconer; porter and his man; two butchers; two keepers of the home-park; two keepers of the red deer park; footmen, grooms, and other menial servants, to the number of one hundred and fifty! Some of the footmen were brewers and bakers. Out-officers: steward of Ragland, William Jones, Esq.; governor of Chepstow Castle, Sir Nicholas Kemys, Bart.; house-keeper of Worcester House, in London, James Redman, Esq.; thirteen bailiffs; two counsels, for the bailiffs to have recourse to; solicitor, Mr. John Smith."

For a length of time the marquis supported a garrison of 800 men. The castle was dismantled by order of parliament on the

conclusion of the civil war. This was not all the rude treatment to which the castle was subjected. The tenants of the marquis took away large quantities of the stone for repairing barns, &c., and several farm-houses were entirely built in this manner. During these proceedings no less than twenty-three staircases were removed; but to his honour be it said, no sooner had the late duke succeeded to the estate than he ordered that not another stone should be removed, and thus the entire demolition of these magnificent remains was prevented.

The castle was founded by Sir William ap Thomas, who married Gwladys, daughter of Sir David Gam, and widow of Sir Roger Vaughan, both of whom fell on the field of Agincourt, and, it will be remembered, were knighted while in the agonies of death by Henry V., as a reward for the prodigies of valour they had displayed in the engagement. From these it descended to William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, who adopted the name of Herbert in honour of his ancestor Henry Fitz-Herbert, who was chamberlain to Henry I. In company with Sir Richard Herbert, of Coldbrook, he was taken prisoner at Danesmoor, and beheaded by the Lancasterian party, 1469. His son, William Herbert, married Mary, sister of Earl Rivers, by whom he had a daughter, Elizabeth, who, by marriage, conveyed the vast estates of the Herbarts to Sir Charles Somerset, afterwards Marquis of Worcester.

The incident of principal importance which has occurred in the history of the castle, and which distinguishes it above other fortresses in the county, is the celebrated siege it underwent in the time of Charles I. That unfortunate monarch, overcome by his enemies and deserted by many of his friends, took refuge, as one of his last resources, in the hospitable halls of the Marquis of Worcester, a nobleman who had devoted his time and fortune to the royal cause, and who remained faithful to the last. The king, weighed down by the number and variety of his troubles, brooded over each misfortune until his naturally vacillating and weak spirit settled down into dejection. During his sojourn in the castle, the noble marquis exerted himself to the utmost by entertainments and other amusements to remove this despondency, an object which the peculiar piquancy and brilliancy of his conversation was

well suited to accomplish. In the year 1642, he raised an army of 1500 foot and 500 horse, placed them under the command of his son, Lord Herbert, and supported them at his own expense. After an ineffectual struggle in various parts of South Wales, the shattered remains of this little army were recalled to Raglan, the castle fortified, and defended with a bravery truly astonishing against the Parliamentarians under the command of Sir Thomas Fairfax. This memorable event commenced June 3rd, 1646, and the gallant veteran did not yield until August 19th, when honourable terms were agreed to, and the garrison marched out with their arms.*

* Among the many persons in the castle at the time of its evacuation were Sir Philip and Lady Jones, of Tre Owen, near Monmouth, which ancient mansion was designed by Inigo Jones, and was once very splendid, but is now reduced and converted into a farm-house, since Llanarth has been made the principal residence of that family.

CHAPTER VII.

LLANOVER — CWRT OVER — MAMHILAD — PONT-Y-POOL — DAN-Y-PARC —
 CWRT-Y-GOLLEN — CRICKHOWEL — THE IRON-WORKS — PWLL-Y-CWN —
 CONCLUSION.

THE town of Pont-y-pool comes within the distance of an agreeable ride from Abergavenny. After crossing the river Usk, and passing on the right the picturesque church of Llanelen, (a structure dedicated to St. Helen,) and also a residence belonging to C. K. Tynte, Esq., now in the occupation of Mrs. Phillips, mother of Sir T. Phillips, (late mayor of Newport,) we come to Llanover, the seat of Sir B. Hall, Bart., M.P., situate about four miles from Abergavenny. The Porth Mawr (or principal entrance) stands on the left side of the road, through which the approach leads to the house, which is a very perfect specimen of the style of architecture of the time of James I., and is of considerable dimensions. The Porth Mawr (above alluded to) is an exact counterpart of the much-admired Tudor Gateway, at Crickhowel. On it are the following inscriptions carved in relief in the solid stone, addressed to the coming and departing guests :—

“ PORTH MAWR LLANOVER .

Pwy wyt, Ddyfodwr ?
 Os Cyfall, Gresaw calon i ti :
 Os Difither, Llettau garwch a’th erys :
 Os Gelyn, Addfwynder a’th garchara.

Ymadawyd hynaws, gad fenthid
 Ar dy ol ; a bendithier dithau :
 Iechyd a hawddfyd it’ ar dy daith,
 A dedwydd ddychwelad.”

Who art thou, comer ?
 If a friend, the welcome of the hearth to thee :
 If a stranger, hospitality shall meet thee :
 If an enemy, courtesy shall imprison thee.

Departing guest, leave a blessing
 On thy footsteps, and may’st thou be bless’d :
 Health and prosperity be with thee on thy
 Journey,
 And happiness on thy return.”

We cannot allow space for a lengthened description of the fine mansion of Llanover. It was built by Sir Benjamin Hall, of native freestone, dug out of the mountain near the house, and was designed by the eminent architect, Mr. Hopper. The hall is considered a model for beauty of design and proportion, and contains a music gallery, elaborately carved in Spanish chesnut wood, and

relieved by gilding. The mantel-pieces of the principal apartments are specimens of the marbles of South Wales; the inlaid table in the centre of the hall is made of the root of the Glynos oak, which grew in this county; the ceilings are peculiarly handsome; the gardens and grounds are very extensive. The brook of the Rhyd-y-Meirch (*Ford of the War Horses*), which gives the name to the village, runs through them, forming several pieces of water within the enclosures of the gardens. In a small grove of beech and hollies are nine wells in a circle, which seem each to possess a separate source; the largest is known under the name of Ffynon Over (*the Well of Gover*), an ancient saint of Gwent, to whom the church of Llanover is dedicated, and from whom the parish took its name. These waters were once in great repute, and are still much valued by the natives.

The ancient residence of the Pritchards (Ap Richard), the descendants of Caradoc Vraich Vras, formerly known as Cwrt Over (*Gover's Court*), and now generally called "The Court," lies in a hollow of the park, on the left of the approach to the house. This building was once of great extent, and the remains are still curious and picturesque: it is now only used as a farmhouse. The park wall extends from the Porth Mawr upwards of a mile, to the village of Rhyd-y-Meirch, where another entrance, called the Porth-y-Pentref (*the village gateway*), leads to the other house of Llanover, which belongs to Mrs. Waddington,* the mother of Lady Hall, and which was formerly the residence of Walter Cecil, the descendant of the Cecils (*or Sytsyllts*), lords of Allt yr-ynys, and ancestors of the great Lord Burleigh, and the last male of that family who resided in Gwent †

* In the grounds belonging to this lady is a single Rhododendron, 150 feet in circumference, which is generally understood to be one of the largest, if not the largest, in great Britain: it was planted by Mrs. Waddington herself, about fifty years ago, having been sent from America as a present by a friend.

† In the possession of Mrs. Waddington is the valuable and unique collection of flowers, executed from nature by her great-aunt, the daughter of Colonel Bernard Granville, niece of George, Lord Lansdowne, and widow of Mr. Pendarves, of Roscrown, in Cornwall, and of Dr. Delany, Dean of Down. Mary d'Ewea (only daughter of Mrs. Delany's sister, Ann Granville, and of John d'Ewea, Esq., of Welshorn, in Warwickshire,) married John Port, Esq., of Ilam, (who gave up the Welsh name of Sparrow on inheriting the Ilam property,) and their daughter, Mrs. Waddington, is the possessor of these specimens of one of the rare talents of Mrs. Delany, by whom she was brought up. The work was invented by

About three miles from Rhyd-y-Meirch lies the small village of Mamhilad, with one of those strikingly beautiful old churches which are scattered over Wales, built substantially of rough stones neatly whitewashed, with a simple belfry very similar to the one at Llansanfraed. We should not, however, have especially noticed this church, was it not for the magnificent yew trees which surround it, and are remarkable for size and number, even in this vicinity where yews are found of great beauty in most of the church-yards.

Proceeding three miles from Mamhilad we arrive at the turnpike-road leading to the town of Pont-y-pool, the situation of which is very picturesque. The name is a corruption of Pont ap Hywel (*the Bridge of Hywel*), near to which stood the house of Davydd ap Hywel, formerly agent to the Hanbury family; and, originally, the bridge was called Pont Davydd ap Hywel, afterwards it was abbreviated to Pont ap Hywel, which at length became the name of the town that gradually sprung up around the residence and bridge of Davydd ap Hywel, spelt by the English (from the sound) Pont-y-pool, but which orthography completely mystifies its history and meaning. The few houses which previously constituted the town were called Trefethin, after the parish. The present town owes its consequence to the family of Hanbury, and to the tin-works, which are well worth visiting. Pontypool-park, the residence of Capel Hanbury Leigh, Esq., the present representative of the elder branch of the Hanbury family, and Lord Lieutenant of the County, is contiguous to the town. The mansion contains some fine apartments—among them is the drawing-room fitted up of late years by Mrs. Hanbury Leigh, and in which the carving of the Welsh Harps, placed as centre ornaments in the window cornices, are particularly admired. There are also some fine pictures, particularly Murillo's, and an excellent library, containing valuable books and manuscripts. The park is remarkable for its

Mrs. Delany, and commenced in the 72nd year of her age, when she gave up Oil painting, an art in which she greatly excelled, and was completed at the age of 84, when the failure of her eye-sight prevented the continuance of her favorite recreation. They consist of ten large volumes in a cabinet, each volume containing one hundred plants, more closely resembling nature than painting: they are formed and shaded by pieces of coloured paper, cut out and pasted over each other with the most wonderful skill. This collection is still complete with the exception of twenty flowers, which were left to her late majesty Queen Charlotte, by whom, and by George III., Mrs. Delany was well known and highly valued.

romantic beauty; and from the valuable grotto of Mrs. Hanbury Leigh, and her poultry court, a view is obtained of the Bristol Channel, while the visitor sees, in the opposite direction, mountain upon mountain clothed with wood, affording a curious contrast to the distant sea view. There is also a drive of three miles through the grounds to a tower commanding a still more extensive prospect. The insertion of some of the verses of the ode to the beautiful Miss Harriet Hanbury, written by her uncle, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, of Coldbrook, may afford interest to the reader, as associating that well-known wit with the present locality and its possessors :—

“ But soon those eyes their strength shall feel,
 Those charms their powerful sway shall find ;
 Youth shall in crowds before you kneel,
 And own your empire o'er mankind.

Charms that in time shall ne'er be lost,
 At least while verse like mine endures,
 And *future Hanbury's shall boast*
 Of verse like mine, of charms like yours.

A little vain we both may be,
 Since scarce another house can show
 A poet that can sing like me—
 A beauty that can charm like you.”

And again, in a song addressed to the Rev. Mr. Birt, on Miss Harriet Hanbury, we find the following humourous lines :—

“ Dear Doctor of St. Mary's
 In the hundred of Bergavenny,
 I've seen such a lass,
 With a shape and a face,
 As never was matched by any.

Such wit, such bloom and such beauty,
 Has this girl of Pont-y-pool, Sir,
 With eyes that would make,
 The toughest heart ache,
 And the wisest man a fool, Sir.

At our fair t'other day she appeared, Sir,
 And the Welshmen all flocked to view her,
 And all of them said
 She was fit to be made
 A wife for an Owen Tudor.

They would ne'er have been tired with gazing
 And so much her face did please, Sir,
 That all of them staid
 Till their ale grew dead,
 And cold was their toasted cheese, Sir.

Then pray make a ballad about her,
 We know you have wit if you'd shew it ;
 Then don't be ashamed,
 You can never be blamed,
 For a prophet is often a poet.

We are not aware whether "the Doctor of St. Mary's" complied with this request, but Sir Charles himself proved a true "prophet" in one respect, as the family has continued pre-eminent for personal attractions ever since that period.

If the traveller extends his ride beyond the town, he will be amply repaid by the scenery surrounding the large reservoirs for the mountain streams, forming miniature lakes along which the road passes several miles, affording at every step new prospects, till he reaches Abercarn, the property of Sir B. Hall, in the mountains, about seven miles from Pont-y-Pool.

We would strongly advise the tourist to spend a day in the neighbourhood of Crickhowel, not only on account of the historical interest that may be connected with it, but to view some of the fairest scenes of nature that can be beheld. He should leave Abergavenny by the Brecon road, at the north-western end of the town ; and as Crickhowel is only six miles distant, he will have sufficient leisure to observe the beauties of the road, which passes through what may truly be denominated "the Garden of South Wales." It is to be regretted that the proper orthography of Crickhowel, as well as many other Welsh names, is not yet restored ; as, where they are preserved, every spot furnishes its own explanation, being indicative of something to be remarked or remembered, as associated with it. There is now, happily, much interest evinced in the restoration of correct orthography of Welsh names, so essential to the explanation of the names of places. Crickhowel is a corruption of *Crûg-Hywel* (Hywel's Mount), though in pronunciation much the same, still the former word is without sense, owing to its orthography.

About four miles from Abergavenny, on the left of the road, we observe the mansion of *Dan-y-Parc*, on an eminence under a wood on the opposite bank of the river : this beautiful place is the residence of W. R. Stretton, Esq., and the Hon. Mrs. Stretton.

On the right we pass the ancient seat of the Davis family—*Cwrt-y-Gollen*. The name of this place is derived from the hazel, with which the woods abound, the translation being—the Court of the Hazel. Collen was, we are aware, the name of a British saint, from whom Llangollen took its name, but that Cwrt-y-Gollen did not, is evident by the use of the "y," which

indicates that the hazel-trees, and not the saint, were the cause of its denomination. The situation of Cwrt-y-Gollen is very beautiful, being backed and surrounded by woods and rocky crags, on which may be observed a flock of goats disporting themselves, much to the gratification of the traveller, who now often looks in vain in his progress through Wales for a sight of these picturesque animals, the aborigines of the Principality, and which appropriately ornament the romantic heights near Cwrt-y-Gollen. A curious stone, of considerable height, is to be observed within the grounds on the road-side, generally considered to be Druidical, but the learned Theophilus Jones believed the "Maen hir" (*long stone*), near Cwrt-y-Gollen, to be *the boundary mark between Gwent and Brecheiniawc*. The town and neighbourhood of Crickhowel contain so many objects worthy of notice, that the scope of this work will not admit of their description. There are many ancient as well as modern fabrics—among the former are the ruins of Crickhowel Castle, which indicate that it was built subsequent to the conquest, and the picturesque gateway, called the *Porth Mawr*, which formerly led to an ancient residence of the Herberts, on the site of which the seat of E. Seymour, Esq., now stands. Through this archway there is a lovely prospect, which is generally pointed out to the notice of the traveller, and of which Bloomfield speaks in glowing terms in the "Banks of the Wye"—amongst the latter is Glan Usk Park, the seat of Joseph Bailey, Esq., M.P., the views from the grounds of which are magnificent. We would advise the tourist to approach Crickhowel on the north bank of the Usk, and return on the opposite side, through the villages of Goveilon and Llanffoist.

We shall not touch upon the Iron district further than to say, that the Iron-Works of Beaufort, Tredegar, Rhymney, Nant-y-Glo, Cwm Celyn and Blaina, Dowlais and Pendarren, may be visited between Clydach and Merthyr Tydfil, within a distance of eighteen miles from Abergavenny; and the geologist will, in this excursion, find ample occupation in examining the character of the Silurian formation. Clydach is a small iron-work about four miles from Abergavenny, on the Merthyr road, and should be explored early in the day, as it is near the water-fall of Pwll-y-Cwn, and surrounded by very romantic scenery. Beyond Clydach the

mountains become barren, and as the works are very unsightly objects by day, we should advise the traveller to visit the more distant iron regions at night. The casting commences at 12 A.M., when the rivers of liquid fire appear to the greatest advantage in the dark, as well as the illumination of the sky produced by the furnaces.

About one mile from Clydach is the waterfall of Pwll-y-Cwn, which is well worthy of notice. The traveller may, in fine weather, proceed up the bed of the brook, the rocks on the side of which are adorned with wood, covered with ivy, and diversified by beautiful cascades. The words *Pwll-y-Cwn* signify the Pool of the Dogs, and being a most sequestered spot, our own impression is that it has reference to some superstitious tradition. This locality is famous for its oral legends of supernatural beings, one of which—“*the Pwcca*,”—is alluded to in Crofton Croker's Legends of Ireland, to which some Welsh legends are appended, with an engraving of the Pwcca, who was said to frequent this spot, and was drawn by a gentleman from the description of a Welsh peasant, by which it appeared to be a black pygmy, with a body like a man, and a head like a bird.* We cannot take leave of this subject without recommending the traveller, when he visits this spot, to diverge from the high-road between Clydach and the village of Pwll-y-Cwn, by taking the tram-road on the left-hand-side, and, after going on for a few hundred yards, he will find a small public-house, called “*The Morning Star*”—*Seren-y-Borau*, where an intelligent and civil Welsh woman, named Rachel Morgan, sister of the host, will point out the path opposite the house which leads to a delightful well under the rocks, and where the grandest scenery may be enjoyed in the shade of the trees which overhang the torrent, while, by the help of a small board placed from one stone to another, the stream may be crossed, and a winding-path explored on the other side, leading to the waterfall, through the most exquisite scenery. This spot is almost as

* It is possible that persons desirous of learning the origin of the word *Pwll-y-Cwn*, might be successful if they collected the legendary tales of this valley; and a prize for the best collection might not be ill bestowed by one of the members of the Cymreigydion Society, as the discovery of a name hitherto unheeded is like the acquirement of a new sense, and frequently throws light upon the history of other objects in the vicinity.

beautiful in the depth of winter as in the summer, as the rocks are then ornamented with icicles, which hang from them in chrystral pendants, under the dark foliage of the weeping yews which o'er-canopy the glen.

Having now arrived at the limits which we have imposed upon ourselves, we cannot conclude without regretting our inability to do greater justice to this interesting locality, and we are aware that many objects worthy of notice are omitted, even within the distance from Abergavenny which we desired to describe; but should we extend this work farther, it would partake more of the character of a county history, than of a Guide to the Environs of Abergavenny. To those who are inhabitants of the town, there may be interest if not information, as, though they can learn nothing from what they themselves may have assisted to contribute, yet they will naturally desire that the records dear to them should be collected in a manner which may tend to perpetuate their remembrance in the minds of their descendants; and perhaps the author may express an humble hope that a still further spirit of enquiry may be created, which may give birth to a work more worthy of the place. Should this volume be perused by strangers, who have time and disposition to explore farther than its pages indicate, we have appended the distances from Abergavenny to places of interest which are not described in the different chapters, as well as to others. Among the former Caerleon cannot be omitted, though, to do justice to the history of that ancient place—the Court of King Arthur!—the City of the Legions!—and once the Metropolis of Wales!—a place which numbered Dubricius and St. David amongst its Archbishops, would require more pages than are contained in this work. We have now only to take our leave of the reader; and if our attempt to attract his attention to any of the beauties of this district, or its interesting antiquities, has failed in creating a desire to know more of them, we beg him to believe that it is not the fault of the subject, but of the manner of treating it; and the best method of convincing himself of this truth, is to judge with his own eyes whether Abergavenny and its neighbourhood are not deserving of a better chronicler.

A P P E N D I X.

THE CYMREIGYDDION.

(a.)—*See page 39.*—The candidates for musical or literary compositions send in their productions to the judges appointed, with what is called a bardic name attached ; their real names are not known unless they are proclaimed successful, after which the sealed packet containing it is publicly opened. Many persons who have competed successfully for a great prize, are better known by the name under which it was awarded than by any other ; but, of course, a new bardic name is assumed for each successive competition, to prevent partiality, as the judges are ignorant of the authors. The same method is pursued with respect to manufacturers. The learned and reverend editor of the poems of Lewis Glyn Cothi is scarcely ever mentioned under the name of Jones, but is universally called *Tegid* (his standing bardic name) ; Miss Jane Williams, of Aberpergwm, is known as *Llinos* (the Linnet), and Lady Hall as *Gwenyfelen Gwent* (the Bee of Gwent) ; while the Rev. T. Price, of Cwm-ddt, is known better as *Carnhuanawc* by many persons than by any other name. One of the most successful female singers is called *Yr Eos* (the Nightingale), and another *Dryw Fach* (the Little Wren). Indeed, were not such the old custom time out of mind of the successful competitors at Eisteddfodau, it would be necessary to pursue this plan for convenience, as in Wales there are so many persons bearing the name of Williams, Price, Davis, Morgan, Jones, Evans, &c., that if they were not possessed of bardic appellations, they must be distinguished by the names of their property, the names of their abode, or their profession ; and in Wales, as in Scotland, the difference is often marked by the name of the place to which they belong, or their calling.

(b.)—*See page 40.*—Among those who have honoured the society by accepting the office of judges of the subjects of the great prizes, we may name his Excellency the Chevalier Bunsen, Mr. Hallam, author of “The Middle Ages,” and Dr. Pritchard, of Bristol. The last subject was “The influence of Welsh Tradition on the Literature of Europe,” and it was won by the learned Professor Meyer, of Rinteln, an eminent philologist, who has made the Cymric language his especial study, and to whom we are indebted for the translation of the poem descriptive of the tomb of Gwladus, in St. Mary’s Church, Abergavenny.

(c.)—*See page 44.*—In addition to the works already mentioned as published by Mr. Rees, of Llandover, and called into being by the Abergavenny Cymreigydion : is the “Coelbren y Beirdd” (*or Bardic Alphabet*)—a prize production of Taliesin ab Iolo ; also, the prize-work of Professor Schultz,—“The Castles of Glamorgan and Monmouth,” edited by the Rev. J. W. Rees ; and “Ancient Airs of Gwent and Morganwg,” by Miss Jane Williams, of Aberpergwm. The Llandover Press is now engaged upon the elaborate and curious genealogical work edited by Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, entitled “The Visitations of Lewys Dwn, Deputy Herald-at-Arms for all Wales, in the time of Queen Elizabeth.”

SUBJECTS OF PRIZES.—To give an idea of the subjects for which prizes are given, we subjoin the list offered for the Eisteddfod of 1845:—

1.—A prize of not less than Eighty Guineas for the best Essay on the Comparative Merits of the Remains of Ancient Literature in the Welsh, Irish, and Gaelic Languages, and their value in elucidating the Ancient History, and the Mental Cultivation of the Inhabitants of Britain, Ireland, and Gaul.

£. s. d.

The most Noble the Marquis of Bute	10	10	0
Sir Benjamin Hall, Bart., M.P., of Llanover.....	10	10	0
Lady Charlotte Guest, of Dowlaies	10	10	0
The Lord Bishop of St. David's	10	10	0
The Right Hon. Sir J. B. Bosanquet	5	5	0
The Rev. J. M. Traherne, of Coedriglan	5	5	0
Rev. Sir Chas. Salisbury, Bart. of Llanwern	5	5	0
His Excellency the Prussian Minister	2	2	0
Her Excellency Madame Bunsen	2	2	0
William Williams, Esq., of Aberpergwm	5	5	0
I. H. Vivian, Esq., M.P., of Singleton	5	5	0
William Jones, Esq., of Clytha I. P. Crawford, Esq., of Blackbrook	5	5	0
Octavius Morgan, Esq., of Tredegar, M.P.	2	2	0
Bruce Pryse, Esq., of Duffryn	2	2	0
	87	3	0

The Essay to be written either in Welsh, English, German, or French. If in German or Welsh, an English or French translation is expected to be added.—Judge, S. Pritchard.

2.—By Lord Viscount Ebrington, and Sir B. Hall, Bart., M.P.: For the best Tract on Cottage Economy, adapted for general circulation amongst the Labouring Classes of Wales, and the best means of improving their sanitary condition—A Prize of Ten Guineas: Medal, £1. 1s.; Premium, £9. 9s.

3. By Thomas Henney, Esq.: For the best Essay in Welsh, with an English Translation, on the Evils arising from the Destruction of Salmon when full of Spawn—A Prize of Twelve Guineas: Medal, £2. 2s.; Premium, £10. 10s.

4.—By R. Rogers Coxwell, Esq., of Ablington, Gloucestershire: For the best Essay on the Heraldic Poetry of Wales—A Prize of Five Pounds.

5.—By the Tradesmen of Abergavenny: For the best Account of the Origin and Progress of the Wire, Tin,

and Japan Works in the County of Monmouth—A Prize of Ten Guineas.

6.—By Rhys Powel, Esq. of Glynllech: For the best Account of the Chieftains of Glyntowy (*Istradgwnlais*), together with the Natural Productions of that District, and National Costume of the Inhabitants—Prize of Five Guineas, and a Silver Bardic Axe.

7.—By the Misses Williams, of Rhymney: For the best Account of the Changes and Improvements that have taken place during the last Thirty Years in Merthyr and the Neighbourhood—A Prize of Two Guineas in a Purse.

8.—By Lady Granville Somerset: For the best Poem on Bees—A Prize of Three Guineas: Medal, £1. 1s.; Premium, £2. 2s.

9.—By Gwenynen Gwent: For the Four best Englynion for the backs of Four Easy Chairs—A Prize of Two Guineas in a Purse.

10.—Also by Gwenynen Gwent: For the best Welsh Song on the Leek, the Emblem of Wales; to be adapted for singing to any old lively Welsh Air—A Prize of Two Guineas: Medal, £1. 1s.; Premium, £1. 1s.

11.—Also by Gwenynen Gwent: For the best Englyn on the Ffynon Over—A Prize of One Guinea in a Purse.

12.—By D. Davies, Esq., of Glangaffenny: For the best Lyric Ode (*Awdl Arwest*), in praise of the superior Bridge over the Taff, and of the contiguous Tunnel, constructed under the able direction of Mr. William Howel, of Merthyr Tydfil, for the Taff-Vale Railway Company. The Stanzas of the Ode to be variously adapted to the Tunes of “Codiad yr Ehedydd,” “Glan Meddwyd Mwyn,” “Dyfyrwch Gwyr Harlech,” “Merch Megan,” and any other two that the competitors please, so that each may suit the extent of its respective tune, without any repetition of lines—A Prize of Five Guineas: Medal, £2. 2s.; Premium, £3. 3s.

13.—By a Lady: For the best Englyn for a Stone Seat under an Oak Tree—A Prize of One Guinea in a Purse.

14.—By the following: For the best specimen of Rodney Woollens, not under ten yards long and forty-five inches wide; the warp to be either of linen or cotton, and the woof to be of cotton and yarn—

	£.	s.	d.
The Lady Rodney	2	2	0
Sir B. Hall, Bart., M.P.	5	5	0
Gwenynen Gwent	3	3	0
Sir John Guise, Bart.	5	5	0

15 15 0

A Prize of Fifteen Guineas in a Purse.

15.—By Mrs. Morgan, of Ruperra : For the best Coloured Welsh Woollen Whittle, in the national stripes or checks, not under one yard and three quarters wide, exclusive of fringe, not to exceed two pounds in weight—A Prize of Three Guineas in a Purse.

16.—By Mrs. De Winton, of Maesllwch : For the best specimen of Welsh Woollen for a dress, not under twelve yards long and twenty-seven inches wide, in the national stripes or checks—A Prize of Five Pounds : Medal £1. ; Premium £4.

17.—By Ieuan ab Hywel : For the best piece of Welsh Woollen for a dress, of not less than twelve yards, ditto ditto—A Prize of Five Pounds.

18.—By Mrs. Maddocks, of Tregunter : For the best specimen of blue cloth for a cloak of Welsh manufacture, not under three yards long by one yard and a half wide—A Prize of Three Guineas : Medal, £1. 1s. ; Premium, £2. 2s.

19.—By the following : For the best specimen of Welsh Woollen, not under three yards long and twenty-seven inches wide—

	£. S. D.
Mr. W. Watkins, Abergavenny	2 2 0
— W. Barber	1 1 0
— J. James.....	1 1 0
	4 4 0

A Prize of Four Guineas in a Purse.

20.—By the following : For the best Woollen Waistcoat-piece, not less than two yards long, and twenty-seven inches wide, in the national stripes or checks—

	£. S. D.
Mr. R. Rees, of Abergavenny	1 1 0
— J. Davies	1 1 0
	2 2 0

A Prize of Two Guineas in a Purse.

21.—By the following : For the best specimen of Colours in Welsh Yarn, dyed in Gwent or Morganwg, or any other part of South Wales—

	£. S. D.
Miss De Winton, Wye Cliff...	1 0 0
A. Wall, Esq., Woodlands ...	1 0 0
W. Maybery, Esq., Brecon ...	1 0 0
	3 0 0

A Prize of Three Pounds.

22.—By a Lady : For the best pair of Women's Knitted Woollen Stockings, in undyed Black Wool—

A Prize of One Guinea in a Purse.

23.—By the following : For the best Lady's Beaver Hat, manufactured in Brecon, Crickhowel, or Abergavenny—

	£. S. D.
John J. De Winton, Esq., of Brecon	1 1 0
A Lady.....	2 2 0
	3 3 0

A Prize of Three Guineas.

24.—By a Lady : For the second best ditto, ditto, under the above restrictions—A Prize of Two Guineas in a Purse.

25.—By Miss Maddocks, of Tregunter : For the Three best New Variations of "Ar hyd y Nos"—A Prize of Three Guineas : Medal, £1. 1s. ; Premium, £2. 2s.

26.—By Miss M. J. Williams, of Aberpergwm : For the best New Welsh Air, consisting of Three Parts, in the Key of B flat, for the Harp, by a resident in Gwent or Morganwg—A Prize of Two Guineas in a Purse.

27.—Also, by Miss M. J. Williams : To the best Female Singer to the Harp, who shall sing the two first verses in Welsh of the Air called "Y Deryn Pur" as published in Miss Jane Williams's Collection of Airs of Gwent and Morganwg, dedicated to the Queen—A Prize of Three Guineas : Medal, £1. 1s. ; Premium, £2. 2s.

28.—By J. W. Rolls, Esq., of the Héndref : To the best set of Singers in Parts—A Prize of Five Guineas.

29.—By the Right Hon. J. Nicholl, of Merthyr Mawr : To the second best ditto ditto—A Prize of Four Guineas.

30.—By Summers Harford, Esq. : To the best Female Singer under Twenty Years of Age—A Prize of Two Guineas.

31.—By Mrs. Williams, of Soybor Fawr : To the best Welsh Female Singer with the Triple Harp, after the manner of Gwent and Morganwg—A Prize of Two Guineas : Medal, £1. 1s. ; Premium, £1. 1s.

32.—By the Misses Williams, of Rhymney : To the second best Female Singer with the Triple Harp—A Prize of One Guinea in a Purse.

33.—By the Rev. M. Price, of Gunley : To the best Penillion Singers after the manner of North Wales—A Prize of Five Guineas.

34.—By Miss Williams, of Aberpergwm : To the best Male Singer to the Harp who shall sing the two first verses in Welsh, of the Air called "Callin Serchus," as published in Miss Jane Williams's Collection of National Airs of Gwent and Morganwg, dedicated to the Queen—A Copy of Miss Jane Williams's Collection of Airs of Gwent and Morganwg.

35.—By Sir Charles Morgan, Bart., of Tredegar (*Ivor Yr Iorfaid*) : To the best Female Performer on the Triple Harp—A New Triple Harp, value Ten Guineas, and a Copy of Parry's Welsh Harper. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg only.)

36.—By Charles Morgan, Esq., of Ruperra, M.P. : To the best Performer on the Triple Harp—A New Triple Harp, value Ten Guineas. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg only.)

37.—By Miss Webb: To the next best Performer on the Triple Harp—A New Triple Harp, value Ten Guineas. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg only.)

38.—By Lady Edwards, Machynlleth: To the best Performer on the Triple Harp—A New Triple Harp, value Ten Guineas. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg, and all North Wales.)

39.—By the following: To the next best Performer on the Triple Harp—

	£. S. D.
Sir B. Hall, Bart., M.P.	5 5 0
Lieut.-Col. Gwynne Holford	3 3 0
Right Hon. J. Nicholl, of Mer-	
thyr Mawr	1 1 0
	<hr/>
	9 9 0

A New Triple Harp, value Nine Guineas. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg, and all North Wales.)

40.—By the following: To the next best Performer on the Triple Harp—

	£. S. D.
Lady Hall	5 5 0
Rev. Mostyn Pryoe	3 3 0
	<hr/>
	8 8 0

A New Triple Harp, value Eight Guineas, and a Silver-mounted Harp Key. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg, and all North Wales.)

41.—By the following: To the best Performer on the Triple Harp—

	£. S. D.
J. Powell, Esq., of Brecon ...	5 5 0
Miss Emma Vennor	2 2 0
Miss Hayward, of Brecon ...	1 1 0
	<hr/>
	8 8 0

A New Triple Harp, value Eight Guineas. (Open to the Counties of Brecon and Carmarthen only.)

42.—By Mrs. Twining, of Pont-y-Pandy: To the Two best Performers of a Duet on Triple Harps, of the Air of "Llwyn On," with Variations—A Prize of Three Guineas in a Purse.

43.—By Mrs. Morgan, of Tŷ Dû: For the best Performer on the Triple Harp, under Twelve Years of Age, of the Air of "Ar Hyd y nos"—A Medal, value Three Guineas. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg only.)

44.—By the Misses Williams, Rhymney: For the best Performer on the Triple Harp, of the Old Welsh Air "Yr Hen Sybil"—A Prize of One Guinea in a Purse.

45.—By the Hon. Capt. Robert Gore: For the best Female Performer on the Triple Harp, of the Air of "Pen Rhaw," who shall not have won a harp at any previous Eisteddfod at Abergavenny—A Prize of Three Guineas: Medal, £1. 1s. ; Premium, £2. 2s.

46.—By Miss Williams, of Aberpergwm: To the best Performer on the Triple Harp of the Air of "Triban Gwyry Morganwg." The Competitors not to be above the Age of Twenty.—A Prize of Three Guineas: Medal, £1. 1s. ; Premium, £2. 2s.

47.—By the following: To the best Performer on the Triple Harp amongst those who are debarred from competition for Instruments—

	£. S. D.
Sir B. Hall, Bart., M.P.	5 5 0
Gwynnen Gwent	2 2 0
T. Wakeman, Esq., of the	
Graig	3 3 0
	<hr/>
	10 10 0

A Prize of Ten Guineas. (Open to Gwent and Morganwg, and all South Wales.)

48.—By the following: To the second best ditto ditto under the same circumstances—

	£. S. D.
T. Wakeman, Esq.	2 2 0
A Lady	3 3 0
	<hr/>
	5 5 0

A Prize of Five Guineas.

49.—By Octavius Morgan, Esq., M.P.: To the third best ditto ditto—A Prize of Three Guineas.

50.—By Owen, Esq., of Newtown: To the best Performer on the Triple Harp, of the Welsh Air called "Y Bardd yn ei Awen," with the four last Variations, as published in Parry's Welsh Harper—A Prize of Five Guineas. (Open to all veteran Harpers who have before gained Prizes from North and South Wales.)

T O M B O F G W L A D U S .

(See page 24.)—The following poem was written by Lewis Glyn Cothi, a Welsh bard, who flourished in the reigns of Henry VI., Edward IV., Richard III., and Henry VII., to the memory of the patriotic Gwladus daughter of the famous Sir Davydd Gam. The poet calls this lady "The Star of Abergavenny," in the priory of which she was buried in the tomb (which she probably herself erected) of Sir William ap Thomas, her second husband, who, with his father-in-law, Sir Davydd Gam, was so distinguished (both losing their lives in saving the king's), and were knighted on the field of Agincourt before they expired—hence, the poet calls Sir William ap Thomas "The stay of England." The first husband of Gwladus was Sir Roger Vaughan, of Tretower. Sir William ap Thomas was buried at Abergavenny in 1446, and his widow Gwladus in the same tomb in 1454:—

MABWNAD GWLADUS ARCH DAVYDD GAM.

Y Seren o y Venni,
At Duw a'r saint y trees hi ;
GWLADUS, lwyddiannus didinam,
Oedd a gorf syr Davydd Gam :
Bwriad Duw dan bridd-do ir,

Braich i Went a Brychanidr ;

Nid llai'n mynu du'n ngwlad Went

No theirmil yn ei therment.
Galv ar Iesu tra vu vyw,
Ac ar y grog a oryw ;
Arglywyddes a santes oedd,
O'r hen arglywyddi'r hanedd.
Mae ei meibion hirion hi
I roi gwleddau'n arglywyddi.
MARSIA gynt, Cymraes gall,
A'r ddwy-laiath a roi ddeall ;

A'i hil y bu'n Nhal-y-Bedd,
Naw a'u henwau'n vrenhinedd.

Gwladus, a hi'n gweled saint,
Oedd all hon i ddal henaint ;

O hon y cawn vrenhinwaed,
A Ierl Gwent ewrilliw o'i gwaed.

Gwladus Ddu, ar Gymmuu gynt,
Iarllies oedd er lles iddynt ;
Ar ol ei rhoi ar elawr,
Yr aeth leng o'r iaith i lawr ;

A heddyw mae'n rhoddi medd

O rwon hono vrenhinedd.

All Gwladus, haul goleudent
Cymry, oedd acw ym mro Went ;
Dyhuno a chyfroi
A wnaeth yn oes ein iaith ni.

Ysgrin ar gysegr o Went
Sy dŷ arglywyddes dwy-Went ;
Pond teg paentiad y gadair !

Pingais val pen Eglwys Vair.
Main beryl, nawmil yn wyn,
Marmawr a mwyo ermynn.

Bedd yr holl venedd yw vo
Oll, a groeswdal Lloegr yndo.
Mae'n gorwedd mewn gweryd

Draw'n y bedd draian yibyd.
Yn seren ar ben y bedd

Y rhoed i gadw enrhydedd,

ELEGY ON GWLADUS, DAUGHTER OF
DAVYDD GAM.

The Star of Fenni (Abergavenny)
Is gone to God and to the saints ;
Gwladus, the happy and faultless,
Whose father was Sir Davydd Gam :
Under a fresh coverlet of earth has God
laid her,
Who was an arm (a support) to Gwent and
the land of Brychan ;
No less than three thousand in the land of
Gwent
Attended her funeral, in black.
On Jesus, before she died, did she call,
And on the cross.
A Lady and a Saint was she ;
From the old kings did she descend ;
Her tall (1) sons will (now) give
Festivals in a lord-like manner.
MARSIA (2), of yore, the erudite Welsh lady
Understood the two languages (Welsh and
English),
And from her proceeded (according to the
inscription on her tombstone,) nine des-
cendants with royal names.
Gwladus, who was considered a saint, was
like Marsia for the great age which she
attained ;
And from her, likewise,
We shall have a race of kings, and golden
Earls of Gwent out of her blood.
Gwladus Ddu (*the dark*),—(3) in the former
times of Wales,
Was a princess, to the benefit of her country ;
After she had been laid on the bier,
A great portion of the (Welsh) language
went down ;
Yet it now still bestows mead (*upon the*
Welsh bards).
From that royal breast (i.e., *the Welsh bards*)
again enjoy honours and gifts in conse-
quence of the protection which the Welsh
language has again received from Gwladus,
daughter of Davydd Gam, and which is
still continued by her family.
A second Gwladus—who to the Cymri was
like the sun (*the pavilion of light*),—(4)—
lived yonder in the land of Gwent, and
she awakened, and aroused to life our
language.
A shrine on a sacred spot in Gwent
Is (*now*) the domicile of the Lady of both
the Gwents (5).
How beautiful is the sculpture of the monu-
ment !
Pinacles like the top of St. Mary's Church,
Nine thousand fine white pearls,
And marble, and a still greater portion of
ermine ;
The tomb of all the nobility it is ;
And the stay of England is contained in it (6).
In that tomb (*now*), lies underneath the
earth,
(*She*) the third part of the world !
At the head of the tomb, like a star, has
been placed,
In order to mark her honorable descent,

(1) Allusion to the surname of the eldest of her sons, Sir Richard Herbert, of Coldbrook, who, on account of his figure, was called Sir Richard *Hir*, i.e., the Tall.

(2) Marsia, queen of Cuhelyn, the 24th king of Britain, according to Geoffrey, of Monmouth.

(3) Gwladus Ddu, daughter of Llewellyn the Great (ap Iorwerth), married successively to Reginald de Braose, and to Sir Ralph Mortimer, by whom she had Roger Mortimer, ancestor of Edward IV.

(4) In opposition to the surname of the other Gwladus, called the "Black" or "Dark."

(5) *Gwent Iscoed* and *Gwent Uwch-Coed*.

(6) Gwladus's husband, Sir William ap Thomas.

Maes glas val cledd Pandrasus,
A'r llwir lir ; a'r llw o lus.

O gylch y twr yn glych, teg

Duw a cedd, ev a'r deuddeg.
Engylion gwynion i'w gylch
A drig bob dri i'w ogylch ;

Organau oll hyd wrig nev,

Ac arianllais cŵr un llev ;

Mil o dyrn amlinw o dan,
Mil eraill aml o arian ;
Mwy no mil o veudwyaid
Dan gwyr, bob deunaw, a gaid ;
Yn nesav mae deunawsaint
Yn bwrw naw sens ger bron saint.

Main beryl cylch Syr William
Oedd vedd gwyn merch Ddavydd Gam ;

Duw, a, wnaeth, i'r, Deau, nawdd,
Duw Iesu a'i dewisawdd ;
Ac o'i rhyw'n benaig y rhawg,
Y dewiswn dywysawg.

A field as blue as the sword of Pandrasus (7),
With a lion argent, and the colour of the
bilberry (purple).

Round the turret (of the monument) have
been placed in beautiful prominent figures
Lord Christ and the Twelve (Apostles) ;
Blessed angels are around it,
Of whom three together
Stand about it

All with organs, resounding 'to the heights
of Heaven,
And with the silver-sounding voices of their
united choir (singing) ;

A thousand fire-coloured torches (there are)
And thousand others of solid silver.
More than a thousand hermits (monks),
Under the wax Tapers
Each eighteen together.
Next (to the tomb) are eighteen saints
Pouring nine streams of incense over the
buried saint :

A fine jewel round Sir William
Is the white Tomb of the daughter of Davydd
Gam !
God took her to the right hand of his grace :
Lord Jesus chose her ;
And we choose a Prince out of her race
To be our King henceforth.*

(7) Pandrasus, a fabulous king of the Grecians, father-in-law to the British Brutus :—See Geoffrey of Monmouth.

(8) The arms of the Herberts, descendants of Sir William ap Thomas, were "party per
pal, azure and gules, three lions rampant argent."

* The above prose translation of this interesting poem was made and given to the author, by Dr. Meyer, of Rinteln, from the original Welsh, the study of which language and literature attracted the learned gentleman from his native country, in the year 1843, after having been a successful competitor for the great prize of the Abergavenny Eisteddfod of 1842.

WERNDDU.—(See page 50.)—Adam Herbert, Lord of Llanllowell, lineal descendant of Herbert, Chamberlain to King Henry I., married Christian, daughter of Gwaryn-dû, (Gwaryn, the black,) Lord of Llandeilo, whose second son, Jenkin ap Adam, was first called Lord of Gwaryn-dû, and from his grandson, Jenkin ap Gwylim, were derived the Progers of Wern-ddû—Gwylim was surnamed Hирpert (*the Tall and Handsome*). Wern-ddû is believed to have been the cradle of the Herbert family in this part of the country.

CLYTHA.—(See page 68.)—The present possessor of Clytha built this mansion at a little distance from the site of the former one erected by his uncle, which he pulled down. This gentleman has a residence in London which he also built, situated near Rutland Gate, containing a gallery, to which his most valuable pictures have been removed : there, also, is placed the *chef-d'œuvre* of modern sculpture—the Group of the Deluge, designed and executed at Rome by the late Belgian artist Kessel, and which has been admitted by some of the best judges to exceed any thing every produced by Thorwaldsen or Canova. Mr. Jones, of Clytha, likewise possesses the wonderful picture of the Deluge, by Danby, which was painted expressly for him, and was several years in being completed ; and these are not the only instances of his liberal patronage of the arts.

THE GOLYNOS OAK.—(See page 74.)—This wonderful tree, which overspread 452 square yards of ground, grew on the estate from which it takes its name, about four miles from the seaport town of Newport, in the county of Monmouth. The diameter of the main trunk was nine feet and a half, from which grew (exclusive of dead limbs) twelve branches, the largest containing 472 feet of timber ; and the whole product of this enormous oak was 2,426 feet. Its bark, which round the trunk was three inches thick, was estimated at six tons. From the butt it was calculated that the tree had been improving upwards of four hundred years ; and

from many of its lateral branches being dead, and some broken off, it is presumed it must have stood, after it had attained maturity, little short of a century. It was purchased by the late Mr. Thomas Harrison, (Purveyor of Plymouth Dock-yard and Dean Forest,) in the year 1810, for one hundred guineas, and when converted, its total produce was six hundred pounds.

CARADOC VRAICH VRAS—(*See page 74.*)—Caradoc of the mighty arm—was one of the Knights of King Arthur's Round Table, and keeper of the dungeon, called “*y castel dolores*” (the dolorous tower.) The learned Theophilus Jones gives a long account of him in his History of Breconshire. He was grandson of Brychan, who died about the year 450, and had three wives, by whom it is asserted he had forty children, who almost all embraced religious lives, and became nursing fathers and mothers to the Church of Wales, and of whose name Brecoen is a corruption. Caradoc is styled “Prince between Wye and Severn,” in the inscription still preserved on the copper-plate over the burying-places of the Pritchards (his descendants), in Llanover Church. He is also alluded to in the Welsh Triads, where it is said, “the three beloved chiefs of Arthur's court, who never could bear a superior in their families, of whom Arthur sung as follows: “These are my three knights of battle—Mael and Lludd, clad in armour, and the Pillar of Wales, Caradoc.”

CWRT-Y-GOLLEN.—(*See page 78.*)—As the English reader may be at a loss to understand why he should find *Collen*, the hazel, and *Collen*, the saint, both spelt with a *C*, and *Cwrt-y-Gollen* and *Llan-Gollen* spelt with a *G*, we think it right to add, that these mutations of the initial letter are ruled by the word which precedes, and are in accordance with grammatical regulations, which those who desire to understand will find best explained in works devoted to the subject of this copious and ancient language—a subject which is now engrossing the attention of philologists in different parts of Europe.

TINTERN ABBEY.—Although this ruin is nearly twenty miles from Abergavenny, it occupies too conspicuous a place, as an object of interest and curiosity in the county, to be omitted. A visit to it is well worth the sacrifice of a day, but the limits of this work will not admit of an elaborate description. The traveller must take the road through Usk, from which town Tintern is about ten miles distant, being three miles on the Abergavenny side of Chepstow. The abbey is a Cistercian erection, founded in 1131, by Walter de Clare: the architecture is of the purest style of florid Gothic. The town of Usk is beautifully situated on the banks of the river whose name it bears: the Welsh call it *Brynbiga*. The tower of Usk Castle still remains, but the date of its foundation is uncertain, though the style of architecture is subsequent to the Norman Conquest. Chepstow will well repay the additional trouble of a ride of some miles, the scenery in the neighbourhood of the town being magnificent, but we are unable to enter into it particularly. About three miles on the Usk-road, leading to Caerleon, is Llangibby Castle, the residence of W. A. Williams, Esq., descendant of Sir Trevor Williams. The house is modernised, but the ruins of the old building remain in the fine wood at the back of the present mansion.

LLANGIBBY.—*Llan* signifies an enclosure, and is applied to all old churches in Wales. It is believed that most of the ancient British churches were erected on the *Llan* previously devoted to Druidical worship, and that some of the massive hollow stones, sometimes chiseled on the outside with circular devices, which are now used as fonts, are of Druidical workmanship. However this may be, it is not unlikely that the early Christians purposely made use of the spots which had been chosen by the Druids for the celebration of the rights of their religion. When churches were built they added to the *Llan* the name of a saint, (as all persons of pre-eminent piety were then denominated,) and it may admit of a question whether the oldest churches distinguished by saints' names were not those erected on the sites previously used for Druidical worship; and those distinguished merely by the locality, as *Llan-Gors*—the Church of the Reeds—(built on the side of a lake), &c., probably were not supposed to need the protection of a saint as much as those raised to replace Druidical altars. But this is a subject which deserves careful investigation and minute inquiry. The more modern Welsh word for church, “*Eglwys*,” was taken from the Greek, *ἐκκλησία*—latin, “ecclesia” (congregation—house of congregation), and is of *later* date. The churches with the name of a saint appended to *Llan* are by far the most numerous, as *Llan-sanfraed*—the Church of San Fraed—(known in English as St. Bride); *Llan-deilo*—

the Church of Teilo (Archbishop of Llandaff in the sixth century) ; Llanover—the Church of Gover, mentioned (with Henwg and Gwarreg) as one of the ancient saints of Gwent. Where the initial consonant is not omitted after Llan, as in the latter instance, it is changed to the soft mutation, as in the former ; and, as in Llan-gibby—(or, properly, *Llan-gybi*)—the Church of Cybi. The British name of Holyhead is Caer-Cybi—the city of Cybi ; and there is a latin inscription on the church of that town, alluded to by Richard Llwyd, in his topographical notices attached to the History of Wales, by Caradoc, of Llancarvan ; it is in Gothic characters—“*Sancti Cybi, ora pro nobis.*” The letter K does not form part of the Welsh alphabet ; it is taken from the Greek alphabet, and was probably introduced in this latin inscription (as it has been in many Welsh MSS. and books,) to convey to the general reader the sound of that palatal consonant which is, in the Welsh of the present day, (as it was in ancient latin,) regularly represented by the letter C alone, till, in consequence of the introduction of Norman-French into Great Britain, the English contracted a habit of giving the letter C two different sounds, viz., its primitive one, which is the same as K, and also that of an S, in those syllables where it precedes one of the light vowels, i, e, and y ; consequently, the Monks, in the above inscription, used the K to prevent Cybi being called Sybi, according to the degenerate practice then first introduced into England, and which caused, at one epoch, the use of the K in Wales, to preserve the primitive pronunciation of the Cymric language. Cybi lived, at the dissolution of the Roman empire, in Britain, and was the great friend of St. Seiriol ; he also founded a monastery. To those interested in the names of ancient churches in Gwent, we would recommend the perusal of the interesting prize-work entitled “Welsh Saints,” by the late learned Professor Rees.

TABLE OF DISTANCES FROM ABERGAVENNY

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— Brecon	20	— Merthyr	20
— Caldicot	23	— Monmouth	16
— Caerleon	19½	— Newport	22½
— Caerwent	21	— Nant-y-glo	9
— Chepstow	22	— Old Court	6
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— Grosmont.....	10	— Scenfrith	11
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